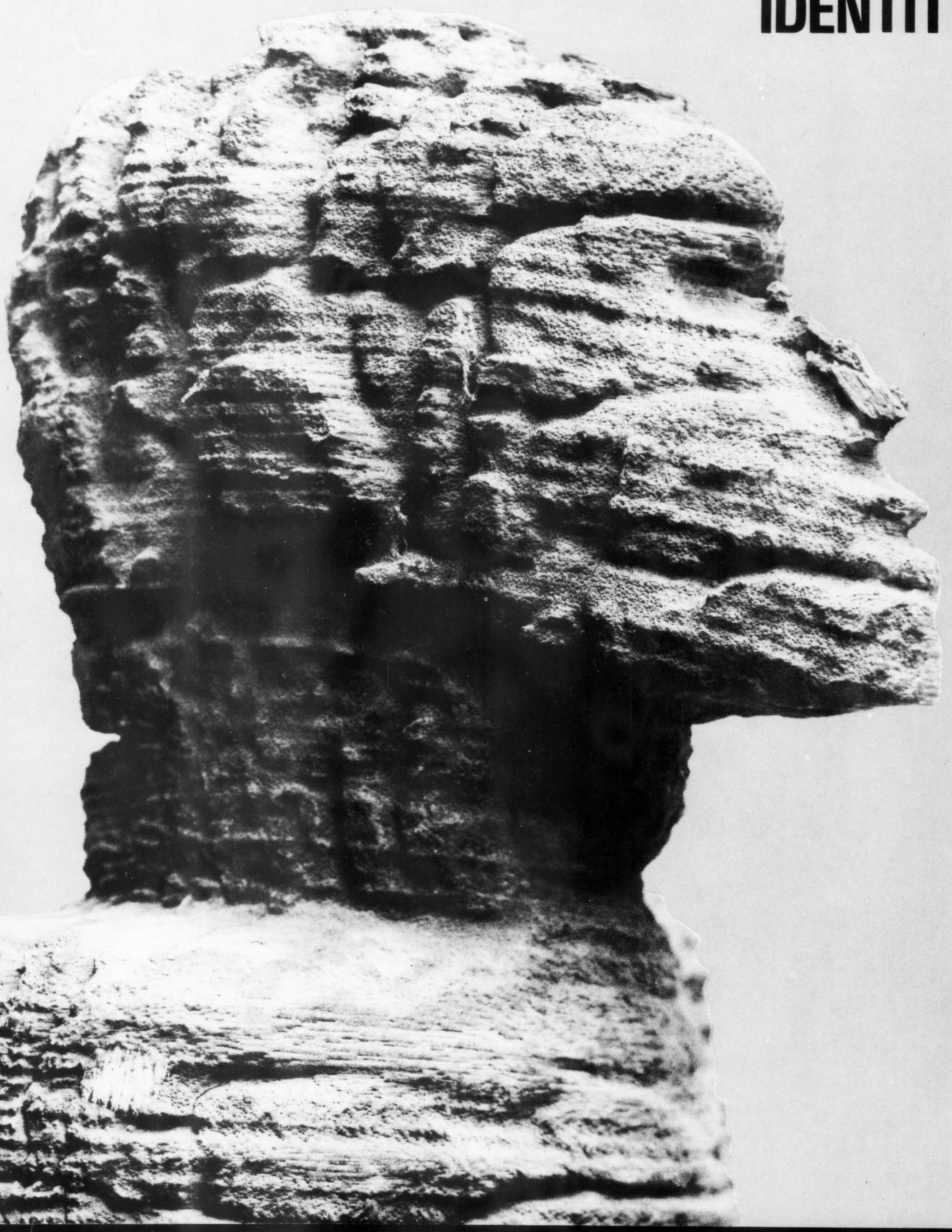
The UNESCO Courier

A window open on the world

February 1976 (29th year) 2.80 French francs

THE SEARCH FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY



TREASURES
OF
WORLD ART

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GHANA

Abode for an ancestor-spirit

This terra cotta statuette (31 cm. high) was modelled by an artist of the Ashanti people (Ghana). The portrayal of an ancestor, it was placed on a tomb or in a cult shrine as an abode for the spirit of the dead person. Photo is taken from "African Masterpieces from Private French Collections" by Marceau Rivière, with a preface by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco. (Published in a trilingual—French, English, German—edition by Editions Philbi, Paris, 1975; price 180 francs, boxed.)

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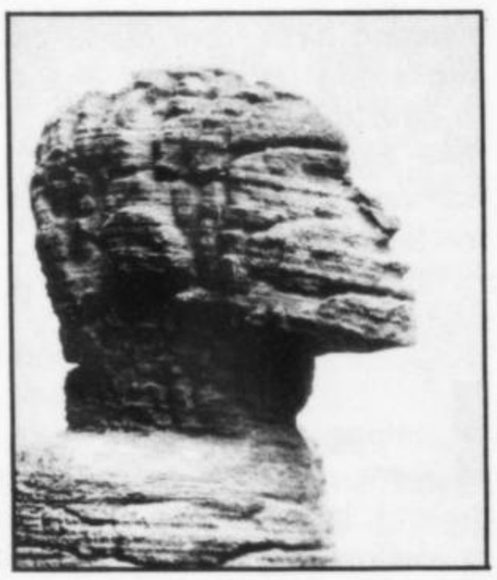

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Cover

Many countries and particularly those which have only recently emerged from colonial domination are today engaged in a rediscovery of their cultural past. They are anxious not only to preserve ancient arts, crafts and oral traditions but also to integrate the forms and values of this heritage into the cultural patterns of modern life. Articles in this issue examine different aspects of this search for cultural identity in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America. Cover shows detail of wooden ancestor statue sculpted by an artist of the M'Bembe people in Nigeria (complete work is seen on page 16).

These bird of paradise feathers form part of an intricate headdress worn by the people of the New Guinea highlands. The relationship between birds and men is strongly expressed in the oral literature and art of Oceanic peoples, especially those from New Guinea. Men identified themselves with birds, and many masks and ceremonial costumes used bird motifs and actual bird plumes to achieve this effect.

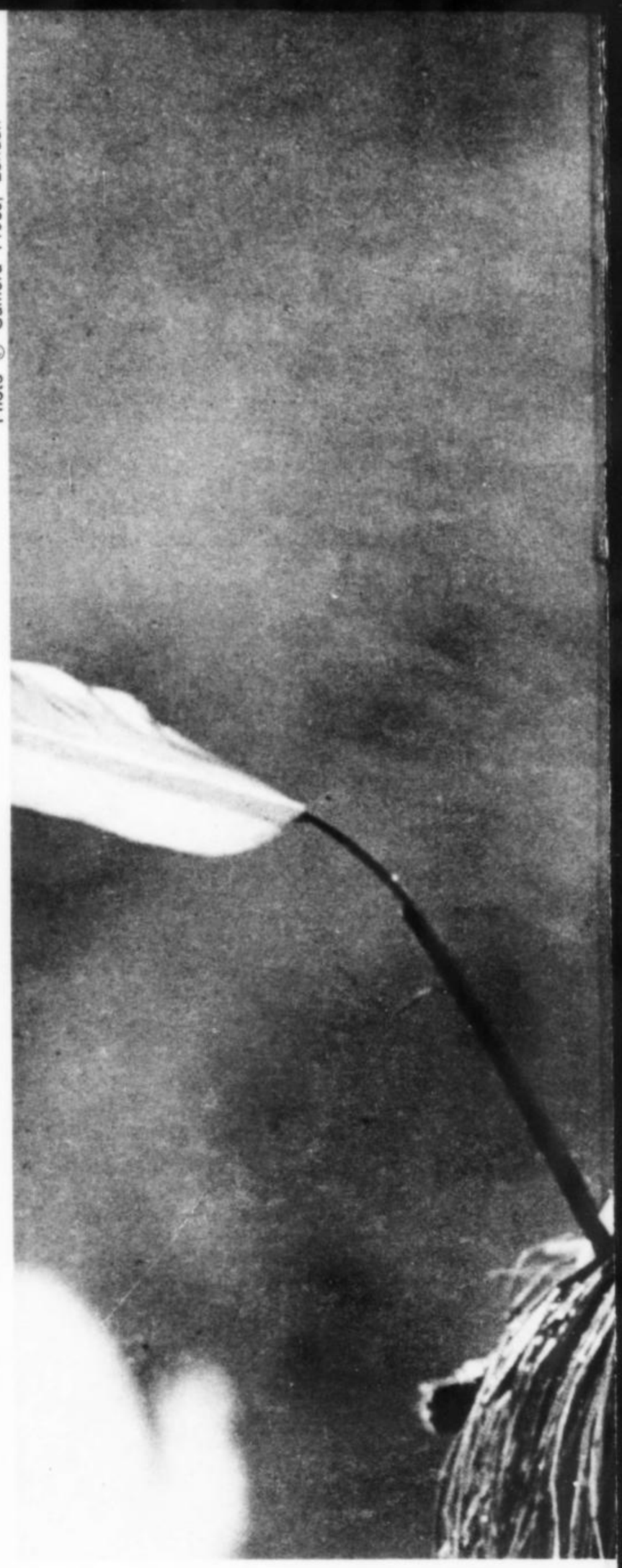

Photo © Camera Press, London

THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN OF OCEANIA

Young writers and artists are leading a cultural reawakening in the Pacific

by Albert Wendt

These islands rising from wave's [edge—
blue myth brooding in orchid,
fern and banyan, fearful gods
awaiting birth from blood clot
into stone image and chant—
to bind their wounds, bury
their journey's dead, as I
watched from shadow root, ready
for birth generations after . . .

(from "Inside Us the Dead")

I belong to Oceania—or, at least, I am rooted in a fertile portion of it—and it nourishes my spirit, helps to define me, and feeds my imagination. A detached, "objective" analysis I will leave to the sociologist and all the other 'ologists who have plagued Oceania since she captivated the imagination of the *Papalagi* (1) in his quest for El Dorado, a Southern Continent, and the Noble Savage in a tropical Eden.

Objectivity is for such uncommitted gods. My commitment won't allow me to confine myself to so narrow a vision. So vast, so fabulously varied a scatter of islands, nations, cultures, mythologies and myths, so dazzling a creature, Oceania deserves more than an attempt at mundane fact.

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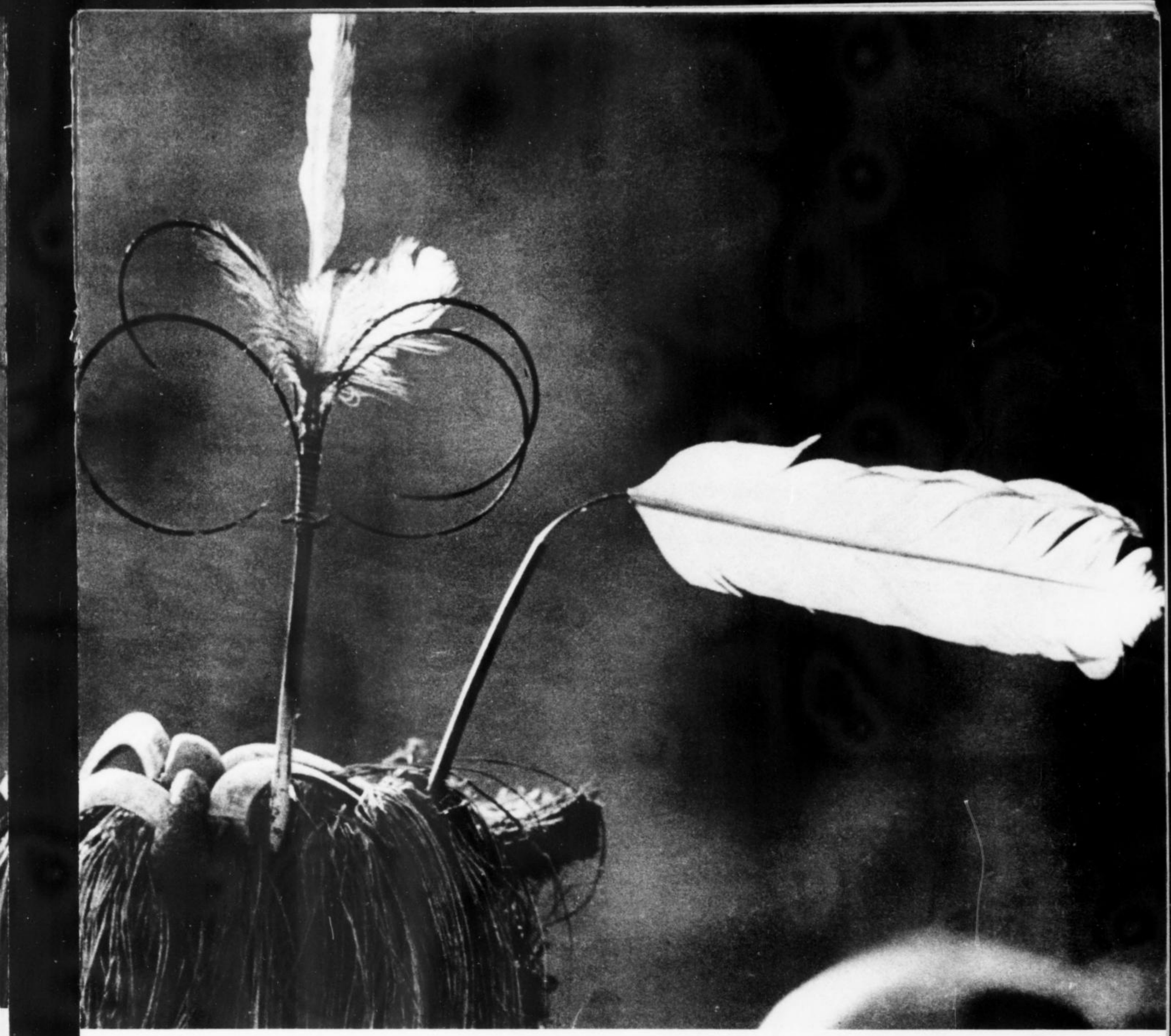
(1) Papalagi: a Samoan word meaning outsiders or non-Oceanians, and often applied to Westerners.

ALBERT WENDT, *of Western Samoa, is an educator, novelist, short story writer and poet. A former principal of Samoa College, Western Samoa, he is now lecturer in Commonwealth and South Pacific literature and creative writing at the University of the South Pacific (Fiji). Among his published works is a novel,* Sons for the Return Home *(1973) and a collection of short stories,* Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree *(1974). A full collection of his poetry entitled* Inside Us the Dead *will appear in June 1976. Mr. Wendt prepared a longer study on the subject of his article as a paper for the Unesco meeting on the study of Oceanic cultures held at Nukualofa (Tonga) in December 1975.*



Only the imagination in free flight can hope—if not to contain her—to grasp some of her shape, plumage, and pain.

I will not pretend that I know her in all her manifestations. No one—not even our gods—ever did; no one does (Unesco experts and consultants included); no one ever will because whenever we think we have captured her she has already assumed new guises—the love affair is endless, even her vital statistics, as it were, will change endlessly. In the final instance, our countries, cultures, nations, planets are what we *imagine* them to be.

In our various groping ways, we are all in search of that haven, that Hawaiki (mythical homeland of the Maori people) where our hearts will find meaning. Most of us never find it, or, at the moment of finding it, fail to recognize it. At this stage in my life I have found it in Oceania: it is a return to where I was born, or, put another way, it is a search for where I was born:

One day I will reach the source again.
There at my beginnings
another peace
will welcome me.

(from "The River Flows Back"
by Kumalau Tawali,
Manus, Papua New Guinea)

Our dead are woven into our souls like the hypnotic music of bone flutes; we can never escape them. If we let them they can help illuminate us to ourselves and to one another. They can be the source of new-found pride, self respect, and wisdom. Conversely they can be the *aitu* (evil spirit or ghost) that will continue to destroy us by blinding us to the beauty we are so capable of becoming as individuals, cultures, nations.

We must try to exorcise these *aitu* both old and modern. If we can't do so, then at least we can try and recognize them for what they are, admit to their fearful existence and, by doing so, learn to control and live honestly with them. We are all familiar with such *aitu*. For me, the most evil is ▶

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris

racism: the symbol of all repression.
Chill you're a bastard . . .
You have trampled the whole world [over
Here your boot is on our necks, your [spear
into our intestines
Your history and your size make me [cry violently
for air to breathe.

(from "The Reluctant Flame"
by John Kasaipwalova,
Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea)

The chill continues to wound, transform, humiliate us and our cultures. Any real understanding of ourselves and our existing cultures calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us. This understanding would better equip us to control or exorcise it so that, in the words of the Maori poet Hone Tuwhare, "we can dream good dreams again", heal the wounds it inflicted on us, and with the healing will return pride in ourselves—an ingredient so vital to creative nation-building.

Pride, self-respect, self-reliance will help us cope so much more creatively with what is passing or to come. Without this healing most of our countries will remain permanent wel-

Carved figures with long faces, narrow noses, barely indicated eyes and prominent chins, like this one, are a distinctive feature of wood sculpture in the Lake Sentani region of western New Guinea. Related to male initiation rites, the statues are placed inside and outside the men's clubhouses in this region. Lake Sentani artists decorate a wide variety of objects, from drums and hooks to household utensils, with highly stylized plant and animal motifs.

Right, housebuilding skills and artistic talent harmonize in the construction and decoration of this "tambaran", or men's clubhouse, from the Sepik River region of northern New Guinea. House seen here was displayed at a Papua New Guinea arts festival held at Port Moresby. Painted bark panels on façade depict ancestor heads and other motifs (see detail of "tambaran" facade on our back cover). Leaning against the house are giant yams decorated in the Sepik manner. Far right, a village craftsman in New Guinea thatches a house with tough grass cut from the nearby mountain slopes. In contrast to such traditional-style homes, a rash of "modern" box-like houses is beginning to erupt across Oceania.

fare cases not only economically but culturally. (And cultural dependency is even more soul-destroying than economic dependency.)

Without it we will continue to be exploited by vampires of all colours, creeds, fangs. (Our home-grown species are often more rapacious.) Without it the tragic mimicry, abasement, and humiliation will continue, and we will remain the often grotesque colonial caricatures we were transformed into by the chill.

As much as possible, we, mini in size though our countries are, must try and assume control of our destinies, both in utterance and in fact. To get this control we must train our own people as quickly as possible in all fields of national development. Our economic and cultural dependency will be lessened according to the rate at which we can produce trained manpower. In this, we are failing badly.

"In a flash he saw in front of his eyes all the wasted years of carrying the white man's cargo."

(from "The Crocodile" by Vincent Eri, Papua, Papua New Guinea)

If it has been a waste largely, where do we go from here?

My body is tired
My head aches
I weep for our people
Where are we going mother.

(from "Motherland" by Mildred Sope, New Hebrides)

Again, we must rediscover and reaffirm our faith in the vitality of our past, our cultures, our dead, so that we may develop our own unique eyes, voices, muscles, and imagination.

In considering the role of traditional cultures in promoting cultural identity in the Oceanic Islands the following questions emerge:

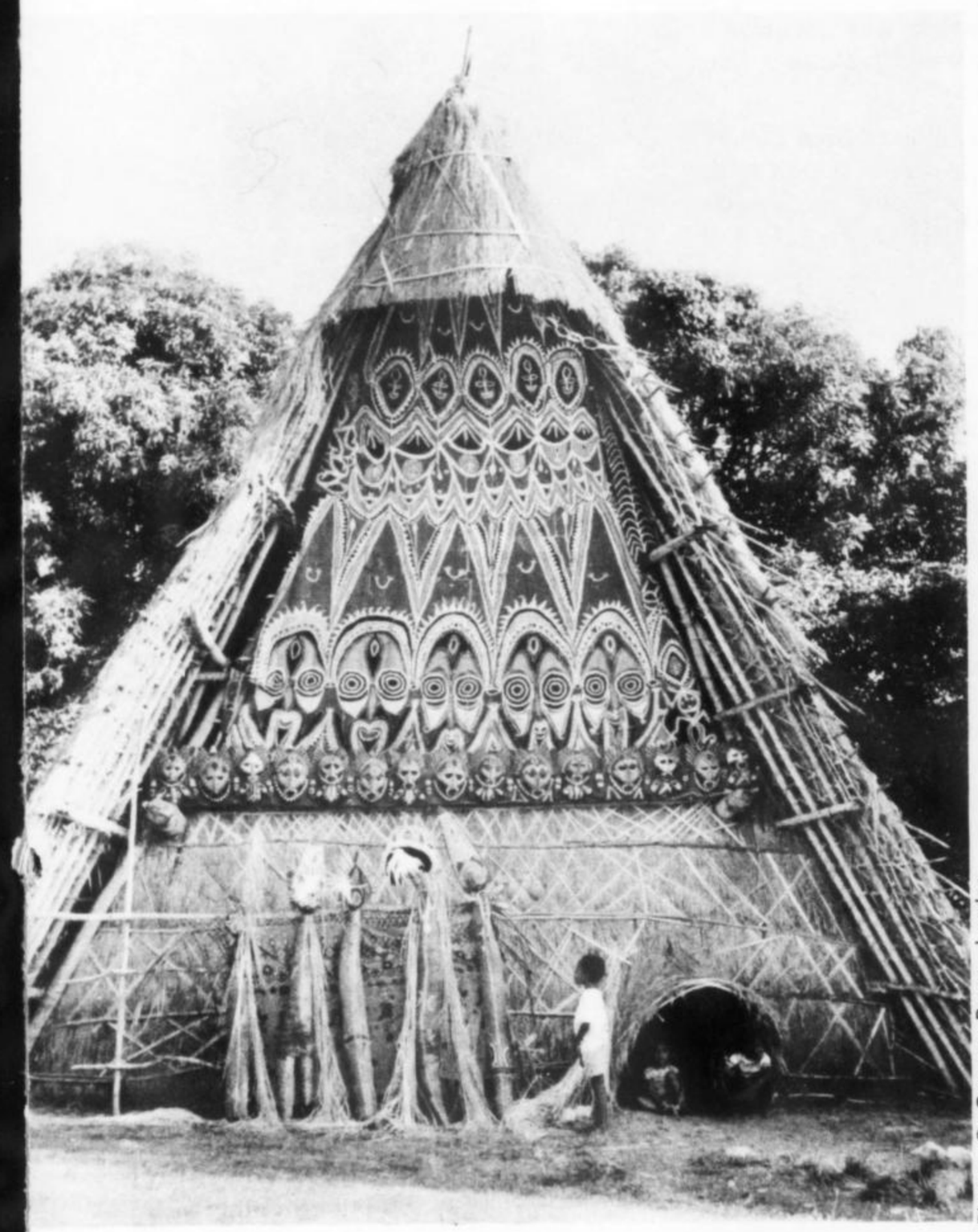
- Is there such a creature as "traditional culture"?
- If there is, what period in the growth of a culture is to be called "traditional"?
- If "traditional cultures" do exist in Oceania, to what extent are they colonial creations?
- What is authentic culture?
- Is the differentiation we usually make between the culture(s) of our urban areas (meaning "foreign") and those of our rural areas (meaning "traditional") a valid one?

Are not the life-styles of our towns simply developments of our traditional life-styles, or merely sub-cultures within our national cultures? Why is it that many of us condemn urban life-styles (sub-cultures) as being "foreign" and therefore "evil" forces contaminating and corrupting the "purity of our true cultures" (whatever this means)?

- Why is it that the most vocal exponents of "preserving our true cultures" live in our towns and pursue life-styles which, in their own terminology, are "alien and impure"?
- Are some of us advocating the "preservation of our cultures" not for ourselves but for our brothers, the rural masses, and by doing this ensuring the maintenance of a status quo in which we enjoy privileged positions?
- Should there be ONE sanctified official, sacred interpretation of one's culture? And who should do this interpreting?

These questions (and others which they imply) have to be answered satisfactorily before any realistic policies concerning cultural conservation in Oceania can be formulated.

Like a tree a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage, and roots. Our cultures, contrary to the ▶



Photos © Camera Press, London

simplistic interpretation of our romantics, were changing even in pre-papalagi times through inter-island contact and the endeavours of exceptional individuals and groups who manipulated politics, religion, and other people. Contrary to the utterances of our elite groups, our pre-papalagi cultures were not perfect or beyond reproach. No culture is perfect or sacred even today.

Individual dissent is essential to the healthy survival, development, and sanity of any nation—without it our cultures will drown in self-love. No culture is ever static nor can it be preserved (a favourite word with our colonizers and romantic elite brethren) like a stuffed gorilla in a museum.

There is no state of cultural purity (or perfect state of cultural "goodness") from which there is decline; usage determines authenticity. There was no Fall, no sun-tanned Noble Savages existing in South Sea paradises, no Golden Age, except in Hollywood films, in the insanely romantic literature and art by outsiders about the Pacific, in the breathless sermons of our self-styled romantic revolutionaries.

I do not advocate a return to an imaginary pre-papalagi Golden Age or utopian womb. Our quest should not be for a revival of our past cultures but for the creation of new cultures which are free of the taint of colonialism and based firmly on our own pasts. The quest should be for a new Oceania.

Racism is institutionalized in all cultures, and the desire to dominate and exploit others is not the sole prerogative of the papalagi. Even today, despite the glib tributes paid to a Pacific Way, there is much racial discrimination between our many ethnic groups, and much heartless exploitation of one group by another.

Many of us are guilty—whether we are aware of it or not—of perpetuating the destructive colonial chill, and are doing so in the avowed interest of "preserving our racial and cultural purity" (whatever that means).

To advocate that in order to be a "true Samoan", for example, one must be a "full-blooded Samoan" and behave, think, dance, talk, dress and believe in a certain prescribed way (and that the prescribed way has not changed since time immemorial) is being racist, callously totalitarian, and stupid. This is a prescription for cultural stagnation, an invitation for a culture to choke in its own body odour, juices, and excreta.

Equally unacceptable are outsiders (and these come in all disguises including the mask of "adviser" or "expert") who try to impose on me what they think my culture is and how I should live it and go about "preserving" it. The colonizers prescribed for us the roles of domestic animal, amoral phallus, the lackey, the comic and lazy and happy-go-lucky fuzzy-haired boy, and the well-behaved colonized. Some of our own people are trying to do the same to us, to turn us into servile creatures they can exploit easily. We must not consent to our own abasement.

There are no "true interpreters" or "sacred guardians" of any culture. We are all entitled to our truths, insights, and intuitions into and interpretations of our cultures.

To varying degrees, we as individuals all live in limbo within our cultures: there are many aspects of our ways of life we cannot subscribe to or live comfortably with. We all conform to some extent, but the lifeblood of any culture is the diverse contributions of its varied sub-cultures. Basically, all societies are multicultural. And Oceania is more so than any other region on our sad planet.

Let me take just two facets of our cultures—education and architecture—and show how colonialism changed us.

Kidnapped

I was six when / Mama was careless /
She sent me to school / alone / five
days a week.

One day I was / kidnapped by a band /
of Western philosophers / armed with
glossy-pictured / textbooks and / regis-
tered reputations / "Holder of B.A. /
and M.A. degrees" / I was held in a
classroom / guarded by Churchill and
Garibaldi / pinned up on one wall /
and / Hitler and Mao dictating / from
the other / Guevara pointed a revol-
ution / at my brains / from his "Guerilla
Warfare".

Each three-month term / they sent
threats to / my Mama and Papa.

Mama and Papa loved / their son and /
paid ransom fees / each time.

Each time / Mama and Papa grew /
poorer and poorer / and my kidnappers
grew / richer and richer / I grew whiter
and / whiter.

On my release / fifteen years after /
I was handed / (among loud applause /
from fellow victims) / a piece of paper /
to decorate my walls / certifying my
release.

(by Ruperake Petaia,
Western Samoa)

This remarkable poem aptly describes what can be called the "whitefication" of the colonized by a colonial education system. What the poem does not mention is that this system was enthusiastically welcomed by many of us, and is still being continued even in our independent nations—a tragic irony!

The basic function of education in all cultures is to promote conformity and obedience and respect, to fit children into roles society has determined for them. In practice it has always been an instrument for domesticating human kind. The typical formal educational process is like a lobotomy operation or a relentless life-long dosage of tranquillizers.

The formal education systems (whether British, New Zealand, Australian, American or French) that were established by the colonizers in our islands all had one main feature in common: they were based on the arrogantly mistaken racist assumption that the cultures of the colonizers were superior (and preferable) to ours.

Education was therefore devoted to "civilizing" us, to cutting us away

A SIDEWAYS LOOK IN MAORI ART

One of the most striking art objects of the New Zealand Maoris is the *hei-tiki*, a carved jade or greenstone pendant worn by Maori women, depicting the human figure with distorted head, body and limbs. Jade *hei-tiki* below, with sideways-tilted head, is 17 cm. high. Maori artists also carve elaborate wood statues of human figures, lizards and other forms to decorate their houses. Right, Maori sculptor Papariki Harrison demonstrates his woodcarving skill at Unesco headquarters, in Paris, during a presentation of Unesco's travelling exhibition on the Art of Oceania (See "Unesco Courier", June 1975). Far right, *hei-tiki* style sculpture carved by Papariki Harrison.

Photo © Roger Guillemot,
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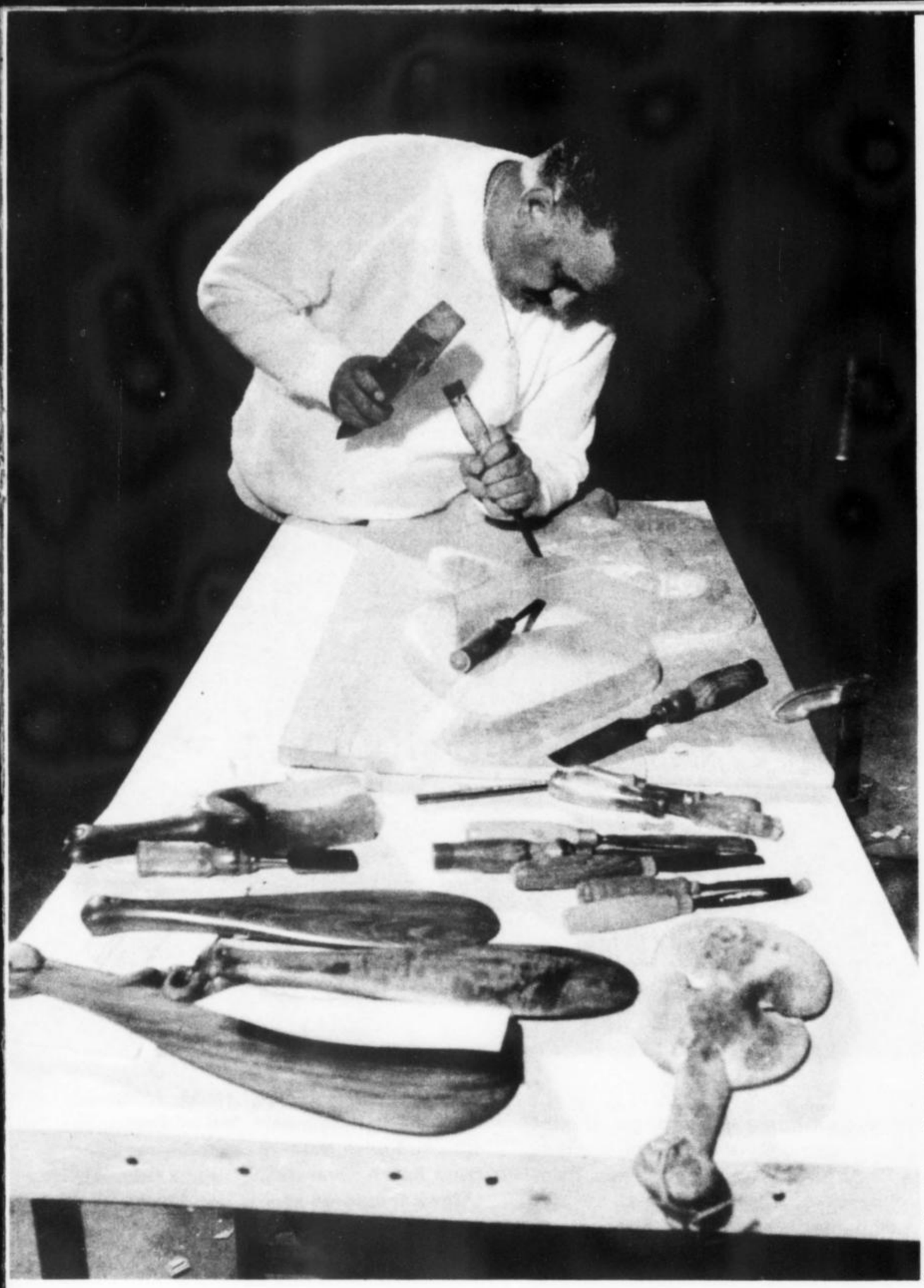

Photos Dominique Roger-Unesco

from the roots of our cultures, from what the colonizers viewed as darkness, superstition, barbarism, and savagery. The production of bourgeois papalagi seemed the main objective; the process was one of castration. The missionaries, irrespective of whatever colonial nationality or brand of Christianity they belonged to, intended the same conversion.

Needless to say, the most vital strand in any nation-building is education. But our colonial education systems were not programmed to educate us for development but to produce minor and inexpensive cogs, such as clerks, glorified office boys, officials and a few professionals, for the colonial administrative machine.

It was not in the colonial interests to encourage industries in our countries: it was more profitable for them that we remained exporters of cheap raw materials and buyers of their expensive manufactured goods.

So the education was narrowly "academic" and benefited mainly our traditional elite groups who saw great profit in serving our colonial masters who, in turn, propped them up because it was cheaper to use them to run our countries. The elitist and "academic" nature of this education was not conducive to training us to survive in our own cultures.

Colonial education helped reduce many of us into a state of passivity, undermined our confidence and self-respect, and made many of us ashamed of our cultures, transformed many of us into Uncle Toms and what the Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul has called "mimic men", inducing in us the feeling that only the foreign is right or proper or worthwhile.

Let us see how this is evident in architecture.

A frightening type of papalagi architecture is invading Oceania: the super-stainless, super-plastic, super-hygienic, super-soulless structure very similar to modern hospitals. Its most nightmarish form is the new-type tourist hotel—a multi-storied edifice of concrete, steel, chromium, and air-conditioning.

This species of architecture is an embodiment of those bourgeois values I find unhealthy and soul-destroying: the cultivation and worship of mediocrity, a quest for a meaningless and precarious security based on material possessions, a deep-rooted fear of dirt and all things rich in our cultures, a fear of death revealed in an almost paranoic quest for super-hygienic cleanliness and godliness, a relentless attempt to level out all individual differences in people and mould them into one faceless mass, a drive to preserve the status quo at all costs.

These values reveal themselves in the new tourist hotels constructed of dead materials which echo the spiritual, creative and emotional emptiness ▶

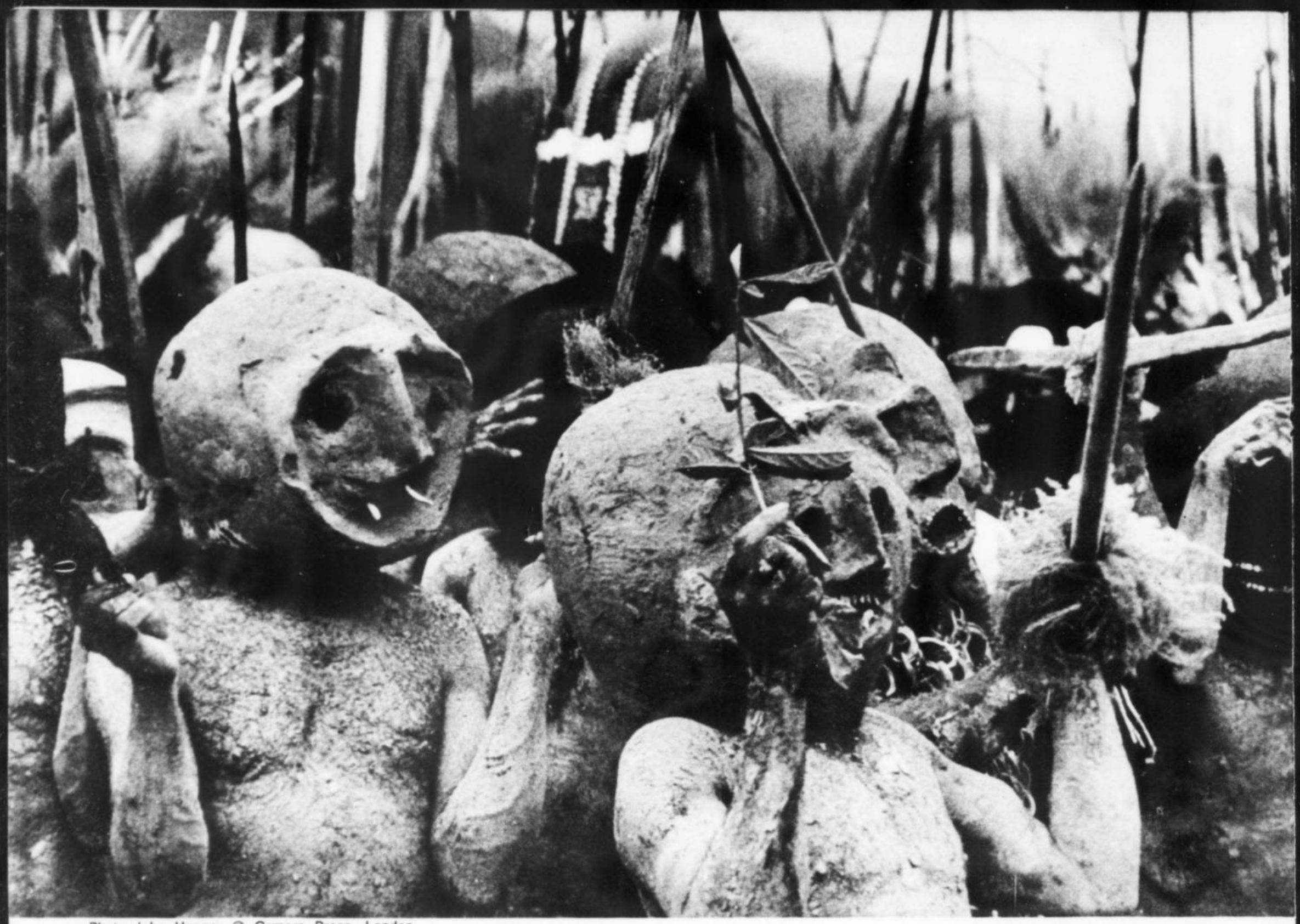

Photo John Hooper © Camera Press, London

in modern man. The drive is for deodorized, sanitized comfort, the very quicksand in which many of us are now drowning, willingly.

What frightens me is the easy, unquestioning acceptance by our countries of all this without considering their adverse effects on our psyche. In my brief lifetime, I have observed many of our countries imitating what we consider to be "papalagi culture" (even though most of us will swear vehemently that we are not!). It is just one of the tragic effects of colonialism—the aping of colonial ways, life-styles, attitudes and values.

In architecture this has led and is leading to the construction of dog-kennel-shaped papalagi houses (mainly as status symbols, as props to one's lack of self-confidence). The change from traditional dwelling to box-shaped monstrosity is gathering momentum: the mushrooming of this bewildering soulless desert of shacks and boxes is erupting across Oceania because most of our leaders and style-setters, as soon as they gain power and wealth, construct opulent dog-kennels as well.

Our governments' quest for the tourist hotel is not helping matters either; there is a failure to understand what such a quest is bringing. It may be bringing money through the middle-aged retired tourist, who travels from country to country through a variety of climates, within his cocoon of air-conditioned America-Europe-New Zealand-Australia-Molochland. But it is also helping to bring those bourgeois values, attitudes and life-styles which are compellingly attractive illnesses that kill slowly, comfortably, turning us away from the richness of our cultures.

I think I know what such a death is like: for the past few years I have watched myself (and some of the people I admire) dying that death.

In periods of unavoidable lucidity, I have often visualized the ultimate development of such an architecture—air-conditioned coffins lodged in air-conditioned mausoleums.

The population of our region is only just over five million but we possess a cultural diversity as varied as any other in the world. There is also a multiplicity of social, economic, and political systems all undergoing different stages of decolonization, ranging from politically independent nations (Western Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Nauru) through self-governing ones (the Solomons, the Gilberts, Tuvalu) and colonies (mainly

MUD MEN OF NEW GUINEA. With their dried-mud masks and bodies smeared with mud, these tribesmen from Asaro River, New Guinea (above) offer a fearsome spectacle. They traditionally adopted this guise to terrify their enemies. Today this custom survives largely in the colourful dance they enact here at a gathering at Mount Hagen (Central New Guinea) held every two years. During this show, thousands of brilliantly-decorated tribesmen from all over New Guinea's Central Highlands take part in displays of dancing and spear charging. A time-honoured feature of New Guinea life is recalled by Port Moresby's Hiri Festival (right) which commemorates the great annual trading voyages made by the Motu people along the west Papuan coast. Traditional singing and dancing and canoe races take place at the festival.

Photo Geoffrey Heard © Camera Press, London

French and American) to our oppressed aboriginal brothers in Australia. This cultural, political, social and economic diversity must be taken into account in any overall programme of cultural conservation.

If as yet we may not be the most artistically creative region in our spaceship, we possess the potential to become the most artistically creative. There are more than 1,200 indigenous languages plus English, French, Hindi, Spanish, and various forms of pidgin to catch and interpret the Void with, reinterpret our past with, create new sociological visions of Oceania with, compose songs and poems and plays and other oral and written literature with.

We also possess numerous other forms of artistic expression: hundreds of dance styles; wood and stone sculpture and carvings; artifacts as various as our cultures; pottery, painting and tattooing. We have a fabulous treasure house of traditional motifs, themes, styles, material which we can use in contemporary forms to express our uniqueness, identity, pain, joy, and our own visions of Oceania and the earth.

Self-expression is a prerequisite of self-respect.

Out of this artistic diversity has come and will continue to come our most worthwhile contribution to human kind. So this diversity must be maintained and encouraged to flourish.

Across the political barriers dividing our countries an intense artistic activity is starting to weave firm links between us.

This cultural awakening, inspired and fostered and led by our own people, will not stop at the artificial frontiers drawn by the colonial powers. And for me, this awakening is the first real sign that we are breaking from the colonial chill and starting to find our own beings.

As Marjorie Crocombe of the Cook Islands and editor of *Mana* Magazine has written: "Denigrated, inhibited and withdrawn during the colonial era, the Pacific people are again beginning to take confidence and express themselves in traditional forms of expression that remain part of a valued heritage, as well as in new forms and styles reflecting the changes within the continuity of the unique world of our island cultures . . . The canoe is afloat . . . the volume and quality increase all the time."

One of the recent highlights of this cultural awakening was the 1972 South Pacific Festival of the Arts during which we came together in Fiji to perform our expressive arts. Much of it was traditional, but new voices and new forms, especially in literature, were emerging.

Up to a few years ago nearly all the literature about Oceania was written by papalagi and other outsiders. Our islands were and still are a goldmine for romantic novelists and film-makers, bar-room journalists and semi-literate tourists, sociologists and Ph. D. students, remittance men and sailing evangelists, UN "experts" and colonial administrators and their well-groomed spouses.

Much of this literature ranges from the hilariously romantic through the pseudo-scholarly to the infuriatingly racist; from the "noble savage" literary school through Margaret Mead and all her comings of age, Somerset Maugham's puritan missionaries, drunks, and saintly whores and James Michener's rascals and golden people, to the stereotyped childlike pagan who needs to be steered to the light.

The Oceania found in this literature is largely papalagi fictions, more revealing of papalagi fantasies and hang-ups, dreams and nightmares, prejudices and ways of viewing our

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AFRICAN ART, WHERE THE HAND HAS EARS

'Every work of art,' says old Africa, 'is like a silent word. Everything speaks. Everything around us imparts a mysterious enriching state of being.'

by Amadou Hampâté Bâ

THE meaning which we give nowadays to the words "art" and "artist" and the special place which they occupy in modern society do not entirely match the traditional African way of thinking.

"Art" was not something separate from life. It not only covered all forms of human activity, but also gave them a meaning.

Ancient Africa's view of the universe was an all-embracing and religious one, and acts, particularly acts of creation, were seldom, if ever, carried out without a reason, an intention, or appropriate ritual preparations.

No one who considers traditional Africa from a strictly secular viewpoint can hope to understand it.

In traditional Africa there was no division between the sacred and the profane, as there is in our modern society. Everything was interconnected, because everything was imbued with a profound feeling of the Unity of Life, the Unity of all things within a sacred universe where everything was interrelated and mutually dependent.

Every act and every gesture were considered to bring into play the invisible forces of life. According to the tradition of the Bambara people of Mali, these forces are the multiple aspects of the Se, or Great Prime Creative Power, which is itself an aspect of the Supreme Being known as Maa Ngala.

In such a context, actions, since they generated forces, were necessarily rituals, performed so as not to upset the balance of the sacred forces of the universe of which man was traditionally both the guardian and the guarantor.

The crafts of the iron-worker, carpenter, leather-worker or weaver were therefore not considered to be merely utilitarian, domestic, economic, aesthetic or recreational occupations. They were functions with religious significance and played a specific rôle in the community.

In the last analysis, in ancient Africa everything was considered as art, as long as knowledge of some kind was involved and also the means and methods of putting it into application.

Art was not only pottery, painting, etc. but everything at which people worked (it was called, literally, "the work of the hands") and everything which collectively could contribute to developing the individual.

These creative activities were all the more sacred since the world we live in was considered to be merely the shadow of another, higher world conceived of as a mysterious pool located neither in time nor in space.

The souls and the thoughts of men were linked to this pool. In it they perceived shapes or impressions which then matured in their minds and found expression in their words or the work of their hands.

Hence the importance of the human hand, considered to be a tool which reproduced on our material plane (the "plane of shadows") what had been perceived in another dimension.

The forge of the traditional ironsmith, who had been initiated into both general and secret knowledge handed down to him by his ancestors, was no ordinary workshop, but a sanctuary which one entered only after performing specific rites of purification.

Every tool and instrument in the forge was the symbol of one of the active or passive life forces at work in the universe, and could be manipulated only in a certain way and to the accompaniment of ritual words.

In his workshop-sanctuary, the traditional African ironsmith was thus conscious not only of performing a task or of making an object, but of reproducing, by a mysterious analogy, the initial act of creation, thus participating in the central mystery of life. ▶

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THE VOICE OF THE MASK. Among the Guro people in the south of the Ivory Coast, the sculptor is a revered and influential figure. He owes his prestige not only to his manual skill but to his contact with the unseen forces of the universe, since it is he who creates sacred objects such as this mask (58 cms. high) of polished hardwood. Ritual marks can be seen on the face.

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris

The same was true of other crafts. in ancient traditional societies in which the concept of the "profane" was virtually non-existent, the craftsman's functions were not performed for money or to "earn a living", but corresponded to sacred functions, to paths of initiation, each of which was the medium for a body of secret knowledge patiently handed down from generation to generation.

This knowledge was always about the mystery of the primal cosmic unity, of which each trade was one particular aspect and form of expression. There were a great many craftsmen's trades, because there were also a great many possible relationships between man and the cosmos, which was the great dwelling place of God.

While the art of the ironsmith is linked with the mysteries of fire and the transformation of matter, the art of the weaver is bound up with the mystery of rhythm and the creative Word acting through time and space.

In ancient times, not only was a trade or art considered to be the embodiment of a particular aspect of the cosmic forces, but it was also a means of making contact with them. To guard against an unwise mixing of powers which might prove to be incompatible, and to keep secret knowledge within the family, these various categories of craftsmen came to practise a system of marriage within their group, regulated by numerous sexual prohibitions.

It is plain to see how these chains of initiation or ramifications of knowledge gradually gave rise, through marriage within the group, to the special caste system of the area formerly known as the Bafour (savanna region stretching from Mauritania to Mali). These castes enjoyed unique status within society.

Let us take a look at the middle class, which particularly concerns us here, namely the class of the craftsmen called, in Bambara, the Nyamakalaw.

Owing to the sacred and esoteric origins of his functions, the Nyamakala could under no circumstances become a slave, and he was absolved from the obligation of war service incumbent upon noblemen.

Each category of craftsmen, or Nyamakalaw, constituted not only a caste, but a school of initiation. The secret of their art was jealously guarded within the group and strictly handed down from generation to generation or from father to son. Craftsmen were themselves called upon to adopt a hereditary way of life, with obligations and prohibitions designed to keep alive in them the qualities and abilities required by their art.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that ancient Africa can be understood only in the light of an occult and religious conception of the universe, where there is a living, dynamic force behind the appearances of all people and objects.

Initiation taught the right way to approach these forces, which in themselves, and like electricity, were neither good nor bad, but which had to be approached in the right way so as not to cause short-circuits or destructive fires.

We should remember that the first concern was not to upset in any way the balance of forces in the universe, which the First Man, Maa, had been appointed to uphold and preserve by his Creator, as were all his descendants after him.

At a time when so many dangers threaten our planet because of human folly and thoughtlessness, it seems to me that the principle thus raised by the old Bambara myth has lost none of its relevance.

After the ironsmith come the traditional weavers, who also possess a high tradition of craft initiation. Initiated weavers of the Bafour work only in wool, and all the decorative patterns on their blankets or tapestries have a highly precise meaning connected with the mystery of numbers and the origin of the universe.

Woodworkers, who make ritual objects, notably masks, themselves cut the wood they need. Their initiation is thus linked to knowledge of the secrets of the African bush and of plant life. Those who make canoes must also be initiated into the secrets of water.

Then come the leatherworkers who are often reputed to be sorcerers and, finally, also belonging to the Nyamakalaw, there is the special caste of *djeliw* or "public entertainers" also known as "griots".

Griots are not only musicians, singers, dancers and story-tellers. Some serve as ambassadors or emissaries, acting as intermediaries between the great families; others may be genealogists and historians They have other roles but those I have indicated are their principal functions.

The griots as a class do not have their own initiation rites, although individually they may belong to particular societies which do have such rites. But they are nevertheless Nyamakalaw, since in fact they manipulate one of the greatest forces capable of acting on the human soul: the spoken word.

While the nobles are bound by tradition to observe the utmost discretion in word and gesture, griots are completely free in this domain. As the spokesmen and intermediaries of the nobles they enjoy a special status in society.

As craftsmen in materials or in

Photo © Little Bobby Hanson, New York

Photo © Luc Joubert, Paris

ART OF SITTING PRETTY. In Africa, the line between arts and crafts is less sharply defined than in other parts of the world. The African craftsman is an artist in the fullest sense of the word. Everyday objects, such as the two finely-wrought chairs shown here, display the same technical mastery and wealth of inspiration as works of religious art. Left, farmer's chair from Togo (78 cms. high). Made of two pieces of wood whose position can be adjusted by means of a slit pierced through the backrest, it can be easily dismantled. The beauty of the chair lies in its grace, simplicity and perfect balance. Above, side view of a chair of the Lobi people (Upper Volta) : seat and back-support have been fashioned in the natural curve of the wood.

speech, transformers of natural elements, creators of objects and forms, and manipulators of forces, the Nyamakalaw occupied a place apart in traditional African society. They fulfilled a major rôle as mediators between the invisible worlds and everyday life.

Thanks to them, everyday or ritual objects were not simply objects but repositories of power. Such objects most often served to celebrate the glory of god and of ancestors, to open the bosom of the great sacred Mother, the Earth, or to give material form to impressions which the soul of an initiate drew from the hidden part of the cosmos and which could not be clearly expressed in language.

In the traditional religion-oriented world, fantasy did not exist. A craftsman did not make something in a spirit of fantasy, by chance or to satisfy a whim. The work had a purpose and a function, and the craftsman needed to be in a state of mind which matched the moment of its creation. Sometimes he would fall into a trance, and when he emerged from it, he would create.

In this case the object was not considered to be his handiwork. He was regarded merely as an instrument or medium of transmission. People would say about his work: "God put it into you", or "God has used you to create a fine work".

Art was, in fact, a religion, a form of participation in the forces of life and a way of belonging to both the visible and the invisible worlds.

The craftsman had to bring himself into a state of inner harmony before beginning his work, so that this harmony might enter the "aura" of the object and have the power to move those who saw it.

He was thus obliged to perform special ablutions and recite litanies which helped to put him "into the right frame of mind". Once he had achieved this, he accomplished his task and transmitted to the work his inner "vibration".

By sculpting, shaping, embroidering, drawing geometrical lines on leather or weaving symbolic patterns, the craftsman gives material form and outward expression to this inner beauty which is within him in such a way that it enters the "aura" of the object, and captures the attention of those who see it for centuries to come. This is the whole secret of his creation.

"A thing which has not kindled beauty in you", says an old adage, "cannot kindle beauty in another who looks upon it". Artistic creation was therefore the outward manifestation of an inner vision of beauty which, according to ancient tradition, was none other than a reflection of the beauty of the cosmos. Art was thus priceless because this whole creative process was something that could not be bought.

There are some statues which one cannot call "beautiful" in the aesthetic sense of the term, and yet they sometimes move us more than a lovely picture, because they are infused with a power which can attract or repel, according to the intention behind the work.

Occasionally, in the bush, one stumbles unexpectedly upon a circle of statues raised by the Komo (custodians of traditional customs and beliefs among the Bambara people of Mali) which seem to have sprung out of the earth. The shock which they produce is so strong that unless their meaning has already been explained to you, your first instinctive reaction is to run away.

An object may also serve as an instrument for the transmission of knowledge by means of the symbols which it bears, such as tapestries, whose patterns may be deciphered, or carved stools whose geometrical lines have a precise meaning.

The work of art, whatever form it takes, is viewed by traditional Africains as a porthole through which one can contemplate the infinite horizon of the cosmos. One can see many things in a work of art depending on one's own degree of development. The seer can use it to contemplate the occult world.

Secular art, which was certainly very rare in ancient times, differed from religious art only in the sense that the secular object was not "consecrated", and therefore not "loaded" with spiritual energy. And there can be no doubt that an object which has been consecrated and used for ritual does not make the same impression as a secular object on anyone who is at all sensitive.

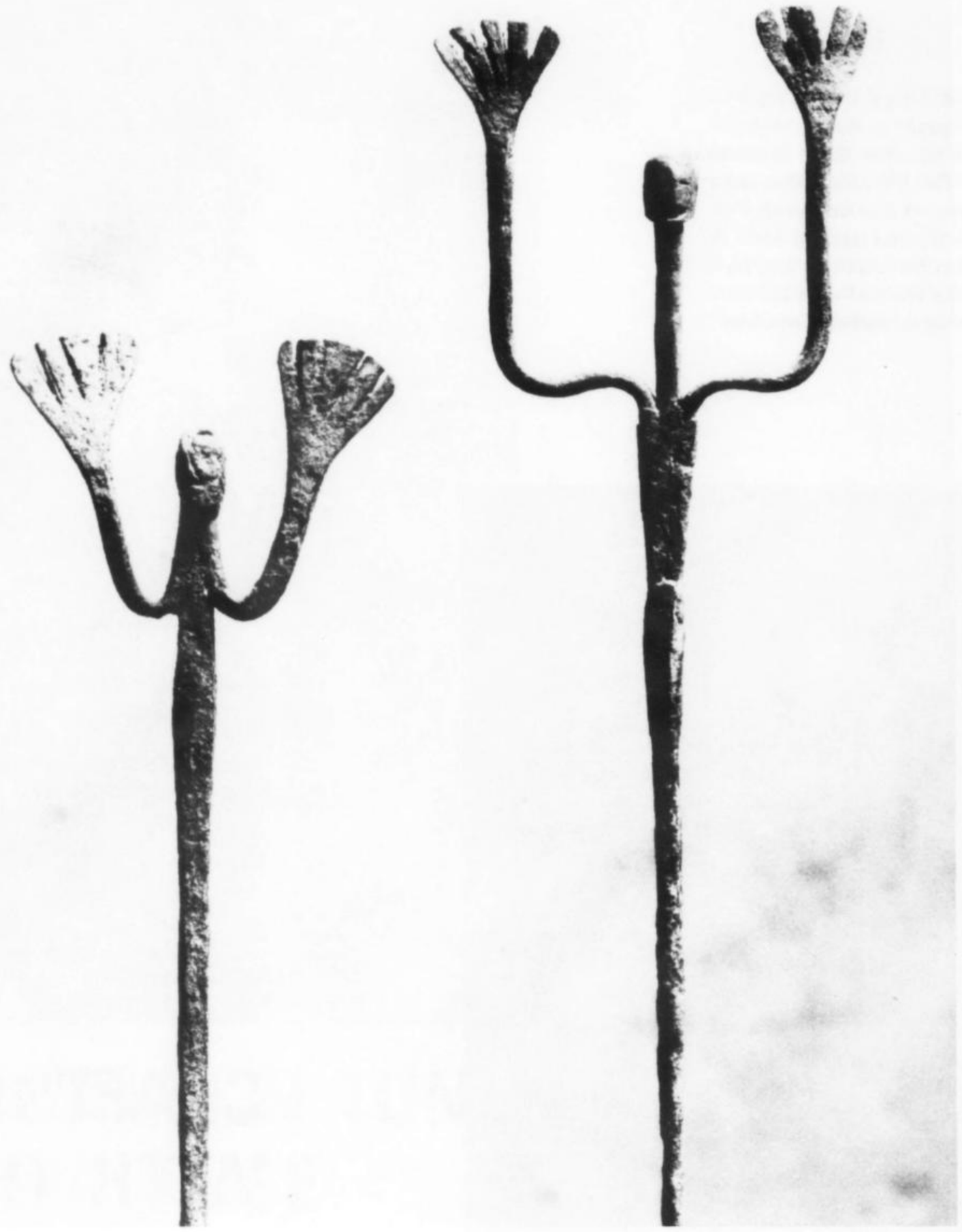
Secular art was considered to be the "shadow" of religious art. It was the visible tip of the iceberg for the uninitiated. One example of the "shadow" role of secular art is the fact that copies were sometimes made of religious masks for the Koté, or traditional theatre.

It goes without saying that secular art has developed chiefly since the colonial era and that it has become very rare to discover an authentic and spiritually "loaded" object.

As soon as a mask had been consecrated, in the Komo tradition, for example, or among the Dogon people, it could no longer be seen in the open. It was hidden from the eyes of the uninitiated and remained either in its hiding-place in the bush or, in the case of the Dogons, in the cave of the masks. Some Dogon masks are so meaningful and so sacred that they are taken out only once every sixty

Photos © Luc Joubert, Paris

ANCESTORS AND RAINMAKERS. The M'Bembe people of eastern Nigeria live in a savanna region where a slow-growing, dense-grained wood is found. This tough material has led M'Bembe sculptors to develop a distinctive style, emphasizing only the basic lines of the forms they carve. Above, M'Bembe statue of an ancestor, relic of the decoration of a great ritual drum between 400 and 500 years old. (Our cover shows a detail of this work.) The tree's growth-rings are clearly visible on the statue, showing that it was carved across the grain of the wood. Right, two figures of rain spirits ("nommo") of the Dogon people (Mali). Wrought-iron statues, 30 and 40 cms. high respectively, their hands are raised in a gesture of incantation, calling down life-giving rain from the sky.



years for the great Sigui ceremony.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that traditional African art was not produced haphazardly, and that it served a central purpose in the human community.

Most works of art, whether plastic or in the oral tradition, had several levels of meaning: a religious meaning, a meaning as entertainment and an educational meaning. So it was necessary to learn to listen to tales, teaching and legends, or to look at objects on several levels at once. This, in fact, is initiation—the profound knowledge of that which is taught through things, through appearances, and through nature itself.

Everything which *is*, teaches through mute speech. *Form* is language. *Being* is language. *Everything* is language.

But, you may say, all that was true in the past. How do things stand nowadays?

True enough, the past few decades have witnessed the destruction, or systematic disappearance, of most of the great traditional initiatory and craft centres. This has happened for several reasons: firstly, colonization policy with its usual and universally applied tendency of effacing systems of values and indigenous customs in order to replace them by its own; next, the promotion of trade by chambers of commerce. These, supported by the authorities, harassed craftsmen and drove most of the workshops out of business.

To mention only two examples, the ironsmiths were forbidden to make certain tools that competed with manufactured products imported from the colonial mother country and plant-healers were prosecuted for the "illegal practice" of medicine.

Gradually, Negro-African art came to be no longer tolerated except at a "folklore" level, and, even then, only if it was remodelled and adapted to suit the tastes of the rulers.

The trend became even more marked immediately after independence, with the general spread of customs and ideologies imported from abroad and the invasion of values based on money. Not only are initiation centres increasingly rare, but even where masters still exist, disciples are lacking.

Western-type studies, the attraction of large neighbouring towns and the desire to earn money draw young people like a magnet and carry them off towards other aspirations.

Traditional African custodians of the arts, sciences and ancient skills still exist. But they are few and as a rule fairly elderly. The treasure of knowledge, patiently handed down for thousands of years, can still be retrieved and rescued if we act while there is still time and are willing to listen to what the old sages have to tell us.

Since independence, the modern African artist has been struggling to assert himself. His search for authenticity and originality is both difficult and poignant, for it is not always free from outside influence.

Today's African artists are on the threshold of a new era, during which they will have a vital role to play. But the importance of this role will depend on how they respond to the challenge.

Ideally, no doubt, they should be able to return to the very roots of African tradition by seeking instruction from the masters who are still alive—instruction not so much in a technique as in a way of "tuning in" to the world.

The only message I have for young African artists is to draw their attention to the profound meaning of their ancestral heritage. This would lead them to take a fresh, more understanding and, above all, more receptive look at the works of art of the past, for these were not only "aesthetic" works (aestheticism had very little to do with African art) but also a means of transmitting something transcendent.

Each object from the past is like a silent word. Perhaps the young artists of today, more sensitive and more receptive than most people, will be able to hear this silent word.

I can only hope that the various governments concerned, aided perhaps by international institutions, will realize the importance of this problem and at long last recognize the full educational and cultural importance of the arts.

We live in a very curious age. The amazing development of science and technology goes hand in hand, contrary to all expectations, with a worsening of living conditions. Along with the conquest of space has come a sort of a shrinking of our world, which has been reduced to its material and visible dimensions alone, whereas the traditional African craftsman, who had never moved from his little village, had the feeling of participating in a world of infinite dimensions and being linked with the whole of the living universe.

The old African saying goes (and perhaps the artist of today can hear it) "Listen! Everything speaks. Everything is speech. Everything seeks to inform us, to give us knowledge or an indefinable, mysteriously enriching and constructive state of being."

"*Learn to listen to silence*", says old Africa, "*and you will discover that it is music.*"

■ ***Amadou Hampâté Bâ***

In traditional African society, every human activity, including a trade or craft, had a symbolic and sacred quality. Since there was no division between the sacred and the secular, each craftsman in working performed a religious function. Each trade reflected one of the many relationships between man and the universe. In this forge (photo 1) in the country of the Dogon people of the Niger Bend area of Mali, a young apprentice fans the fire by working a pair of bellows. The air which fills the bellows is traditionally associated with semen, the generative substance of

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CRAFTS WITH TI

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Photos © Claude Lefèvre, Paris

TSMANSHIP IN TUNE THE UNIVERSE

Photo © Léon Herschtritt, Paris

life. Another fertility-symbol can be seen on the door of a millet-granary, carved by a Dogon sculptor in the form of breasts (2). In most African countries, cotton-weaving is an exclusively male occupation, while cotton-spinning is done by women who, like this Chad village woman (3) are often helped by their daughters. A Senufo artist of the Ivory Coast (4) colours in animal shapes he has outlined with a knife on pieces of white material joined together and stretched out on a board. He stains the figures with mud and plant and vegetable dyes.

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Photo © Fulvio Roiter Venice

AFRICAN ARTS TAKE THE HIGH ROAD AWAY FROM WESTERN ART

by Magdi Wahba

THREE general features appear to be common to all the independent African countries: their shared experience of European colonization, the social mobility of their new élites and the absorption of their cultures into the wider context of politics, religion or social institutions. If necessity be the mother of invention she is also the stepmother of a monolithic philosophy of social organization.

The poor, the weak, the hungry can ill afford variety of experience and expression, nor can they indulge in the luxuries of disputation. Their lives are haunted by the spectres of starvation, poverty, despair and the gruel kitchen. Nothing else really matters, and it is against such a background that culture must struggle to obtain a precarious foothold.

Ministries and Departments of Culture have sprung up in most African countries whose aim is to embody the national ideals and culture in activities, academies and museums, but the most widespread means of diffusion is still the radio and, to a lesser extent, television. The purveyors of culture find very soon that their best chance of success is in reducing their message to an oral one, fitting into the broadcasting system.

The cosy, ubiquitous transistor has the virtue of cheapness coupled with the freedom of privacy. Besides it fits into the general spirit of oral tradition which has been the main transmitter of most of African culture since time immemorial. The radio is also the most important means of dissemination in the Islamo-Arab countries of Africa, where the spoken word and the traditions of chant, recitation and song are truly historical and dominant.

Yet the question may be asked, can culture be limited to the broadcasting of words, images or music? Is not the true repository of culture the printed word? Roger Caillois, French philosopher and writer, in a thoughtful introduction to a Unesco meeting of cultural policy experts in Dakar in 1969, raised this question with regard to African culture.

In substance, his words were a cry of alarm with regard to developing countries. There was, he felt, a terrible temptation to skip the stages of development and to go directly to television and the tape-recorder, without passing by reading and writing. And yet, he maintained, there is no true substitute for reading and writing as stimuli for critical thought. He was convinced that cultural development was closely linked with schools and universities, with reading and writing. Is culture, in its broadest, universal sense not primarily the culture of the book?

If such is the case, then there is little choice, especially against a background of almost universal poverty, but to link cultural dissemination and the preservation of cultural values with the educational systems of Africa. Here also may be posed the problem of the visual arts.

In the European context, after the age of the great cathedrals, art certainly became an expression of individual, identifiable talent. The artist bore a name and his name was transmitted down to posterity by means of a culture based on accumulated book-learning. In most of Africa, art has always been functional, deeply involved in the material, social and religious needs of the community. But it is also anonymous.

In North Africa, of the ancient arts of mosaic, copper beating, marquetry and calligraphy, it is the latter only which has some claim to individualization. In Africa south of the Sahara the traditional arts are becoming more and more part of a museum of folk-arts preserved with some effort for the benefit of the tourist trade and the research of the ethnologist.

Oral tradition, also anonymous, nevertheless survives with much more vigour, becoming adapted to the various modern literary forms with remarkable ease, and thus entering, as it were, the limelight of an individuated author.

Again, in North Africa, the romances of the *Arabian Nights* and the epic chronicles of the Hilaliya and the tales of Antarah have obtained literary passports to modern respectability in a variety of literary and dramatic adaptations, which have lifted them from the trough of anonymity, but also cut them off from their social origins.

How many graduates from the educational systems in Africa wish to explore their community and find ways and means by which they can be active in enhancing the quality of the society to which they belong? How many schools or universities for that matter would happily abandon didactic for non-didactic methods of instruction in order to produce a new generation with an intellectual curiosity whetted instead of stifled?

One of the causes of the mediocrity perpetuated in many African educational systems is the almost blind insistence on the transmission of certitude to wavering consciences. How can culture, local or universal, flourish in such a wilderness of certitudes?

Further questions we might ask are: What culture? Whose culture?

In the Islamo-Arab North there is a common language which for historical and religious reasons subtends a

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common world outlook. There is a classical heritage in that language, which can supply the people with common literary memories.

If a certain amount of generalization may be allowed, this is a condition not to be found easily in other African languages, with the possible exception of Swahili in the east and Wollof in the west. English and French will remain, for a long time to come, the main organs of cultural and instructional transmission in many parts of Africa.

There is something dramatic about the way in which a civilization of "orality", based on the perpetuations of memory, is having to come to terms with the written word, in English or French or in the transcription of the various national languages.

Inevitably, the epic chants and rhythmic encomia of the "griots" lose their immediacy when written down or broadcast on the radio. Anthologies with introductions by learned anthropologists are *saving* oral tradition, but they are also *freezing* it in time. Never has it been more true than now that "an old man dying is a library going up in flames", to quote a Malian sociologist and historian, Amadou Hampâté Bâ (author of our article on page 12). The problem of music and the visual arts is no less dramatic.

In modern Arabic music, before the revival of the classical heritage, it has been possible to trace influences as varied as the rhumbas and tangos of the 1930s together with the odd bar here and there from Tchaikovsky or Beethoven or even Bach. These have been added, together with such exotic instruments as the accordion and the electric guitar, to the classical rhythms and melodies of traditional Arabic music without any sense of incompatibility or strangeness.

And yet Arabic music is not a folk music in the accepted sense of the term, nor is it strictly "pop" music. Its classical repertoire is held as much in reverence by one hundred million Arabs as, say, Beethoven's later quartets are by music-lovers the world over.

As for the music of Black Africa its close association of the human voice with percussion instruments places it well within that civilization of "orality" mentioned above. The roots of this music are in ritual and in folk memory, and their various attempts to come to terms with Afro-Cuban, Afro-American or even plainly Western European rhythms and instruments have created what may be regarded as a very confused mixture of modern dance music and ritual rhythms.

The integration of the artist into society cannot be the result of any special sort of legislation. Artists are not artificially induced phenomena. They are often "made", but generally they are "born", they are *there*, and something has to be done about them.

Neither prophet nor legislator, acknowledged or unacknowledged, the ▶

When Ramses Wissa Wassef, an Egyptian architect, set up a weaving workshop for teenagers near Cairo, his aim was to integrate art into everyday life and to improve the status of the craftsman, too often considered as a manual worker rather than as an artist. (See *Unesco Courier,* July-August 1965). Spontaneously and without the help of preparatory sketches, the young weavers create remarkable tapestries. Below, detail from a tapestry depicting a traditional circumcision ceremony, by a girl artist, Rawhia Ali.

Photo © J.P. Bonnin, Paris

Photo © Abdel Fattah Eid, Cairo

artist is often tempted to withdraw from the traffic of an acquisitive or an ideology-ridden society. He lays himself open to the charge of isolation and sterility, and his work may be regarded as no more than a creation of private fancy. This is not a pleasant situation for the artist, since one of his main motives is to communicate and to be appreciated.

The educational systems have to ascertain, first of all, the ultimate destination of the artist in African society before they can be expected to plan the manner of his training. Almost inevitably, the artist is to become a public servant, a teacher or a state-supported artist.

Perhaps that is why most of the African educational systems concentrate on the technical training of schoolchildren in the rudiments of draughtsmanship, mechanical drawing and those crayon or water-colour sketches of themes which inculcate national pride at an early age and which grace the walls of so many exhibitions of schoolchildren's art all over the world.

Naturally this remark may be regarded as unfairly sarcastic, but the fact remains nevertheless that these various practices do not properly constitute an initiation into the world of art. They are more in the nature of tedious exercises akin to the drawing of maps by young children.

In Egypt, the late Ramses Wissa Wassef had to face this problem when he started the weaving centre at Harrania outside Cairo, where he encouraged young peasant children to develop their own artistic gifts. His first inspiration came from reflection on the question of the artist and the craftsman. (See "Unesco Courier" article, July-August 1965.)

"By defining one as a creator, and the other as a manual worker", he has written, "our civilization, with its conventional classifications, routines and ill-considered generalizations, has sundered art and craftsmanship, and is threatening to strangle both of them" (1).

The great interest of Ramses Wissa Wassef's educational experiment is that it is applicable with slight modifications anywhere in Africa. Highly successful and, one might add, extremely lucrative for the young weavers' co-operative, it is also an important contribution to modern philosophies of artistic education. Easily integrated into the environment, whether rural or urban, this experiment provides the key for combining the virtues of teaching and play without any artificiality or concession to outside influences.

This integration of the arts into what can loosely be called "life", is very much part of the general philosophy of the arts which has flourished in Egypt over the last thirty years or so. Hassan Fathy's world-famous experiment in building the village of Gourna in Upper Egypt is another illustration of the desire to return to the roots of a culture without sinking into the pitfalls of folklore.

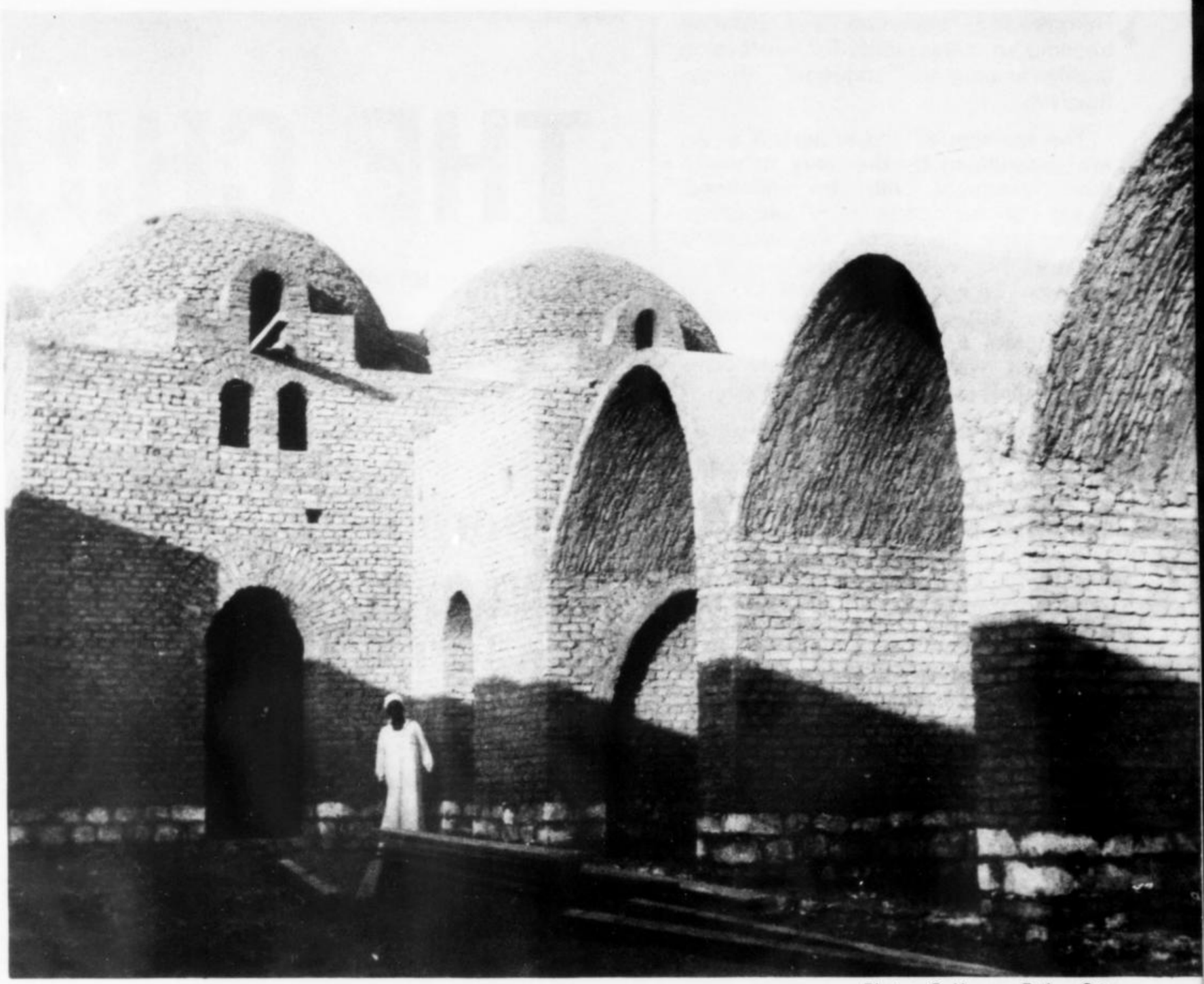
Here the problem is not strictly the teaching of an art of self-expression, but rather the teaching of a craft which is essential for the welfare of a rural community—the craft of building. Let me be allowed to describe the problem in the author's own words:

"If a village is to be built by its own future inhabitants, then we must give them the necessary skills. However much enthusiasm the co-operative system may engender, it will do little good if the people don't know how to lay bricks. . . We need a method of teaching the peasant the elements of practical building so that he can contribute usefully to the building of his village, but we don't want to turn him from a productive farmer into a skilled but unemployable mason . . .

"By training the villagers on the public buildings, which will be erected

(1) Ramses Wissa Wassef, *Woven by Hand*. Translated from the French by Denis Mahaffey. Hamlyn, London, New York, Sydney and Toronto, 1972.

NILE VALLEY FARMERS WHO BUILT THEIR OWN VILLAGE



Photos © Hassan Fathy, Cairo

An Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy, has shown how a community can affirm and enrich its cultural identity by using ancient skills and materials and adapting them to modern uses and needs. He did so by teaching the villagers of Gourna in Upper Egypt to build the houses they badly needed, using mud bricks, a cheap, locally available material. Using designs which in some cases were inspired by traditional Egyptian architecture, the villagers were able to construct a beautiful village whose cool, hygienic and comfortable dwellings combine modernity with real character. Opposite page, facades of farmers' houses in one of the village streets. Above, vaults under construction in the training centre where farmers learn to become masons. Top, village craftsmen's school nears completion.

first as the core of the village, we can make use of the architects and master-craftsmen engaged by the building authority, and they can pass on their skills to the people. Then, even if the authority cannot afford to build many private houses, the skills will have been implanted, the village centre will be there, and the inhabitants will be able to go on for themselves. . . The maturing of skill is an experience of considerable spiritual value to the craftsman, and a man who acquires the solid mastery of any skill grows in self-respect and moral stature. In fact the transformation brought about in the personalities of the peasants when they build their own village is of greater value than the transformation in their material condition" (1).

Both Hassan Fathy and the late Ramses Wissa Wassef had to come to terms with the problem of integrating the arts and crafts into a society where the pressures of sheer survival might have monopolized the attention of most people.

This integration is second nature, however, in such ritualistic societies as that of the Mambila on the high plateau in the province of Sarduana in Northern Nigeria. For the Mambila there has never been relief from a subsistence economy and yet the arts are lively because of their integration into the tribal initiations which constitute the spontaneous education of the Mambilas.

The men learn to work on iron, wood, bamboo and cotton fabrics, while the women specialize in the most elaborate basketwork from childhood. Artistic work is associated with the social expression of changes in status, such as engagement and accession to adulthood. Art becomes therefore a linguistic system of symbols which is not perfected for its own sake or for the sake of entertainment. ▶

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(1) Hassan Fathy, *Gourna, A Tale of Two Villages*. Ministry of Culture, Cairo, 1969.

Hairdressing, sculpture and painting become so many media for expressing highly emotional "language" ritualistically.

The techniques and materials of art are determined by the uses to which their products will be destined. There is no pottery or sculpture among the Peuls of the southern Sahara, for example, because their nomadic lives do not permit of such luxuries, but the rich ornamentation of their dress makes up for this, providing an avenue for extremely complex artistic inventiveness.

Different environments and social customs have emphasized certain purely functional or ritualistic forms of art, such as mask-painting among the Chokwes of Angola, and tattooing in countless hunting communities all over Africa. Carving in wood or other materials is also tied up with the ritual significance of the work of art.

The initiation of the tribal artist is generally undertaken by the blacksmith of the village, whose position is regarded as something between teacher, technocrat and maker of tools which he will then use himself in carving. This is the case among the Bambara of Mali, the Baoule of the Ivory Coast and the Kongo of Zaïre.

In the Musée de l'Homme in Paris there is a great statue of the god Gu, god of war and patron of all blacksmiths, which was brought over from Dahomey during the latter half of the 19th century. Made of bits of scrap iron, chain and railway girders from Europe, it is none the less an African representation of a dominant god, whose province is both destruction and the making of life-perpetuating works of art.

It is from this foundation of absolute social integration without any pretence of exhibitionistic individualization or academic drawing, that education in the arts must begin if it is not to contribute to a pale parody of western European art.

Basically, the problem in Africa is one of coming to terms with the outside world. It is no use pretending that nationalism is enough, or that cultural resistance can find a *modus vivendi* with technological progress. Nationhood is a fact, not an angry argument, and the so-called African "personality" is nothing if it is not the aggregate of millions of individually unique personalities.

The true challenge lies, therefore, in the response to that very simple, that poignantly simple, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." In the last analysis, is anything else either verifiable or true?

■ ***Magdi Wahba***

THE CHILDREN OF THE WHALE

Extraordinary legends make up the oral traditions of Siberia's far north

by Yuri Rytkheou

WHY is it that research on oral traditions, especially those of the peoples of the North, has concentrated mainly on tales of fantasy or on heroic epics divorced from everyday life? What has become of all the realistic stories and historical legends, many of which are sufficiently precise and authentic to take the place of written sources?

Could it be that this type of story represented a mass culture which has been gradually vanishing like an outdated fashion? I do not believe this is the case.

I think it would be wrong to consider the vast store of folklore which has not been published in collections of tales and legends as the mass culture of the era before such stories were recorded in writing.

We should remember that there was an unwritten law, a kind of tacit censorship imposed by the rules of society which restricted the diffusion of these stories. The Chukchi people of northeastern Siberia, near the Bering Strait, for instance, have a proverb about the power of the spoken word. "A word can kill a man", they say.

I heard Chukchi tales and legends from the lips of my grandparents, who brought me up. As I lay under the cover of the reindeer-skin rug, my heart would skip a beat when a passing guest, come to seek the warmth of our hearth, began to recount some tale unknown to me. ▶

YURI RYTKHEOU *is a Soviet writer whose work is rooted in the oral folk tradition of his people, the Chukchi of far eastern Siberia. His books on the Chukchi have been translated into many languages. Among his published works are* The Chukot Saga *(1956),* The Melting of the Snows *(in Russian, 1958) and* A Dream in Gathering Mists *(1959). He has also produced a collection of Chukchi tales, published in French with Unesco assistance as* Contes de la Tchoukotka *(Les Publications Orientalistes, Paris, 1974). The complete version of the present text has just appeared in Unesco's international quarterly "Cultures" (Volume II, No. 4, 1975).*

Photo Dimitri Baltermantz © APN, Paris

The Chukchi and Eskimo peoples of northeastern Siberia have a rich folklore of tales, fables, proverbs, songs and dances. One legend relates that they have a common ancestor, a whale-father. Photo shows a famous Eskimo singer and dancer, Nutetein, who composed songs in the Chukcha language, accompanying them on the *iarar*, the traditional Chukchi drum made from the skin of a walrus's stomach stretched across a circular frame. Photo was taken shortly before his death.

The folk tales of the Chukchi, unlike modern written literature, contained a wealth of circumstantial detail about place and time of year, though the hero of the tale was seldom named, only his tribe and the language he spoke.

How then were books reconciled with this ancient and familiar art of story-telling in the traditional setting of the *yaranga*, the Chukchi tent of seal or reindeer skins? When I was a child, the Chukchi had already ceased to look on books as an unfathomable miracle. Some would speak with a condescending smile of the time when these solid slabs of pages were mistaken for the well-tanned skins of some mysterious beast, and reading was likened to the familiar process of nosing out tracks, with the sole difference that in this case it was human speech that was being "nosed out".

But in my childhood books were already familiar objects; only their contents were regarded as miraculous.

In the beginning, books naturally ousted oral folk literature which, along with the *yaranga*, skin boats and fur thigh-boots, was regarded as a relic of the past, a sign of backwardness.

At the same time we could not discard folk literature completely.

In my own experience, oral literature was a constant, familiar element in our lives, and one which we accepted as natural. Even at the time when I was studying at the university and helping to compile textbooks for Chukchi schools and anthologies and collections of stories, for me oral folk literature was a reality, something existing and developing independently.

But it was only when I began my career as a writer that I was led to reflect about the role of the oral tradition.

HAD I not studied the history of world literature and attended lectures on folklore, aesthetics and other academic subjects, I might perhaps never have pondered on the sources which were to provide the roots for my literary work. These roots went straight back to the oral folk tradition of my own people.

But there was one thing that made me pause: contemporary literature is so totally different from unwritten lore and especially the tales, legends and myths and moral stories of the Chukchi people. Who would listen to me recounting these tales, however new they might be, even if I wrote them down? And what could I hope to discern with the help of the artistic vision of my forbears? Would I not be like someone attempting to make new discoveries in astronomy while using a telescope as rudimentary as Galileo's?

At the time when I was writing my first stories there already existed, in both Soviet and world literature, a quantity of works describing the mysterious life of the land of the midnight sun, the people of the Arctic wastes, the realm of ice and snow.

A few books had been written by captains of whaling vessels who had observed the life of the shore encampments through their binoculars and, on the basis of what they saw, had tried to describe the life and character of the Arctic peoples. Most of the other accounts of the Chukchi and Eskimos expressed sympathy with their struggle for existence, combined with astonishment and admiration for their achievements. These books credited my people with all kinds of real virtues, now half forgotten, such as their outstanding honesty and capacity for self-sacrifice, their warm hospitality, their readiness to help the traveller, qualities described as now rare among the peoples of so-called civilized societies.

But surprising as it may seem, my own feeling when reading these stories was one of profound and growing irritation. I could almost see the well-meaning author making as though to pat me condescendingly on the head and with a pitying smile on his face, offer me a crumb from his table. It never occurred to him to invite me to sit by his side, or even simply to shake me by the hand. His attitude was one of pity and sympathy for his younger brother, whom he was trying, perhaps even sincerely, to help and please.

There were of course also some works, European, American and Soviet, full of genuinely humane feeling. But all viewed the subject as it were from outside, and while being enraptured by it, the authors were no less enraptured by their own nobility.

About the middle of the 1950s I decided to write a story about a contemporary of mine, a man who had discovered modern culture through a series of astonishing and often distressing adventures. I wanted to find out what happened when a man who had his roots in an ancient culture came into contact with a great modern civilization with all its diversities and uneven values. So I wrote the book that was subsequently entitled *The Melting of the Snows*.

I delved back into the memories of my own childhood, to those moments of vision when I suddenly seemed to see things with extraordinary clarity. I found it impossible, of course, to convey the atmosphere of my childhood days without recapturing my attitudes and those of the people amongst whom I lived. And it was then that I saw how our whole way of life had been coloured by the oral folk traditions which formed the background of our everyday philosophy.

The whole of *The Melting of the Snows* was permeated by the tales and legends of my childhood days. And I realized that in a book of this kind, I could not do without them. Had I tried to eliminate all the folk elements, there would simply have been nothing left. And as time went on, I found it more difficult to do without the resources of folklore.

A few years ago, I set to work on the novel *A Dream in the Gathering Mist*. This is the story of a Canadian man who is to spend all his life amongst the Chukchi people. Its principal theme is the brotherhood of men regardless of their origins, the colour of their skin and the stage they have reached on the road to social progress.

I had to find a way of enabling the Chukchi to convey to the Canadian their ideas about the brotherhood of man, so I made one of the heroes of the novel, Toko the hunter, who had given the Canadian shelter, recount the ancient legend of the origin of the seafaring folk, the hunters of the sea.

"...old men say that on these shores, in days long ago, there lived a young maiden. And so beautiful was she that even the mighty sun, gazing at her in wonderment, remained always in the sky, and the stars came out in daylight to behold her. Wherever she trod, flowers sprang up, and fountains of water spurted forth.

"The fair maiden went often down to the shores of the sea, for she loved to watch the movement of the waves and listen to their rippling. The whisper of the wind and the waves would sometimes lull her to sleep, and then the beasts of the sea would gather on the shore to gaze upon her. The walruses would come up on to the shingle, and the seals stared at the maiden with their unblinking eyes.

"Then one day, an enormous Greenland whale came swimming past. His curiosity aroused by the cluster of beasts on shore, he came closer in, perceived the maiden and was so entranced by her beauty that he forgot whither he was going, and on what errand bent.

"And when the sun, exhausted, had sunk down on the horizon to rest awhile, the whale swam inshore again, touched the shingle with his snout, and turned into a comely youth. The maiden, seeing him, cast down her eyes. So the youth took the maiden by the hand and led her into the tundra, into the soft grass, and lay with her on a carpet of flowers. And so it was that, every time the sun sank

down on to the horizon to rest, the whale swam inshore, turned into a man and lay with the fair maiden.

"Time went by, and she knew that she was with child. So the whaleman built a large *yaranga* where he took up his abode with the maiden, and never again swam out to sea.

"Whale-babies were born, and their father put them in a small lagoon. Whenever they swam up to the shore in search of food, their mother would go down to meet them. They grew apace, and soon there was no longer room for them in the lagoon, and they began to yearn for the freedom of the open sea.

"Their mother grieved to see them go, but all to no avail, for whales are beasts of the deep. So the whale-children swam away out to sea; and their mother conceived once more, but this time she bore not whales but human children. The whale-children never forgot their parents, and often swam inshore to gambol in their sight.

"Time passed. The children grew up and the parents grew old. The father went out hunting no more and his sons procured the food. The first time they set out to sea, the father called them to him, and pronounced these parting words:

" 'For the bold and the strong, the sea will provide. But remember one thing: your brothers also live in the sea as well as your distant cousins the dolphins and the finback whales. Never raise your hand against them.'

"Soon after this the father died: and the mother grew too old to accompany her sons out to sea. The sons took wives, and many children were born to them. They needed more and more food. So the whale children became seafaring people—Chukchi and Eskimos—living by trapping and hunting the beasts of the sea.

"Then came a year when there was little game to be caught offshore. The walruses no longer followed the path to the village, the seals swam off to distant parts, and the hunters were forced to go far out to sea where they perished, some on the ice-fields, some in the ocean depths.

"Only the whales were always there, gamboling merrily off the shore. Then one day, one of the hunters said:

" 'Why do we not kill the whales? Just think of all that meat and blubber! Why, one carcass would suffice for us all, both us and our dogs, the winter through.'

" 'But have you forgotten, then, that the whales are our brothers?' the others objected.

" 'How can they be our brothers?', scoffed the one who had spoken first. 'They live not on land but in the water, they have long, ungainly bodies and they know not a word of human language.'

" 'But legend says . . .' protested the others.

" 'A fine lot of old wives' tales . . . the first hunter cut them short, and went off to prepare his boat, taking all the most skilled and stalwart oarsmen along with him.

"Catching a whale presented no problem, for they all swam up to the boat, as they always did when they saw their brothers putting out to sea. But this time their trust spelled death to one of their number.

"Once harpooned, it was a long struggle to drag the whale to shore, and all the folk of the village, including even the women and children, were summoned to help.

"The man who had caught the whale entered the *yaranga* to tell his mother of the prey he had captured for the people. But she already knew and was dying of grief.

" 'I have killed a whale', he said as he came in, 'a solid mass of meat and blubber.'

" 'It is your brother you have killed', his mother replied, 'and if today you are ready to kill your brother just because he looks different from you, what will you be ready to do tomorrow?'

"And so saying, she breathed her last."

BY using this ancient fable in my novel, I was able to convey my meaning without boring my readers with a long didactic exposition.

There is of course nothing novel about my discovery that works of oral tradition may often be the only means of reaching the modern reader, and indeed increasing numbers of Soviet writers are adopting this device.

It is impossible, for instance, to conceive of Chinghiz Aitmatov's tale, *The White Steamer*, stripped of the poetic legend of the Horned Deer Mother, the ancestress of the Kirghiz people.

Aitmatov has, I think, succeeded in making the best possible use of the ancient myths of his people, and he has found the ideal solution to the problem of the modern writer and oral folk tradition.

The writing of the other newly literate peoples of the Soviet Arctic has developed along roughly the same lines. Many of their writers are my contemporaries, personal friends of mine, and most of them studied with me in Leningrad. But for all their similarities, they differ widely from one another both in the character of their work and in their attitude to our oral folk traditions.

Vladimir Sanghi, who is of Nivkh nationality, was born on the Island of Sakhalin, in the easternmost part of the Soviet Union. He was steeped from earliest childhood in the enchanted atmosphere of Nivkh oral poetry with which are blended elements of the culture of the North Pacific Ocean, the transitional zone between the warm tropical waters and the frozen Arctic seas.

Sanghi, after completing his studies, returned to Sakhalin and began to make a collection of the island folklore. He started his literary career by publishing folktales in Russian and his native language, and in this way he discovered his vocation as a writer.

THE Mansi poet Yuvan Shestalov belongs to a people of hunters and reindeer breeders living in the Arctic foothills of the Urals. The Mansi, like the neighbouring Khanty people, belong to the Finno-Ugrian linguistic group. As a poet, Shestalov draws deeply on the treasures of his native folklore. Some of his poems and song-cycles are based wholly on subjects taken from oral poetic tradition, while others are simply a transposition of folk legends.

So it is clear that oral folk tradition plays a considerable part in the modern literature of the newly literate peoples, even though writers rarely draw on this material when dealing with present-day society on the grounds that it provides no solutions for the urgent problems of our time. And yet contemporary literature offers many examples of the use of mythological themes for the solution of vital artistic problems.

But the question still remains as to how to use this invaluable material for the enrichment of contemporary culture, how to find a place for it not only in books, archives and recordings, but also as a source for literary creation. And this is a question to which I can see no simple answer. Indeed, there probably can be none, for every modern writer evolves his own individual attitude to the rich oral heritage of his own people.

Yet a return to one's origins, to the unsullied sources of folk art nearly always leads to new artistic discoveries. No works of man breathe such joy and optimism, such faith in the triumph of good over evil, such subtle humour and such sensitive understanding of social harmony and justice as we find in oral folklore.

These, I believe, are the qualities that for countless centuries have enabled oral folk traditions to shape the attitudes of each new generation.

■ ***Yuri Rytkheou***

THREE IN ONE

Latin America's originality as a continent of Indian, African and Iberian racial and cultural mixture

THE vast ensemble of land, history and peoples which we call (inappropriately to say the least) Latin America has a great variety of distinctive characteristics. Racial intermixture *(mestizaje)* is its most typical and striking feature.

This word, discredited because of the derogatory connotations given to it for many reasons by Europeans, in reality implies much more than a simple question of mixed blood.

It is true that there has been a considerable and significant intermingling of peoples in Latin America during the past five centuries of its history. The Spaniards interbred with the Indians. In fact the first direct contact between Indian and European was probably that of rape and from the earliest days there were countless *mestizos* born throughout the length and breadth of the Spanish Empire in the Americas.

The rise of new institutions and political structures in the centres of power—in Lima, in Mexico City and in Santo Domingo—was contemporary with the appearance of a large mestizo population. But Spaniards and Indians were not alone in this intermingling of peoples. Soon black slaves appeared on the continent, forming the principal if not the sole labour force on the plantations, in cattle-raising and in domestic service.

This intermixing of races, practised to varying degrees depending on the period or the region, was both widespread and significant. More important than its social effects, however, was a much less visible and far more profound process—the meeting, confrontation and fusion of living cultural heritages.

The dominant and characteristic heritage was brought in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Spaniards, in the form and image of a closed hierarchical society with its seigneurial order, its Catholic faith, a disposition for belligerence and mysticism, and a scorn for work and manual occupations.

The second heritage was that of the great indigenous civilizations, static and marked by a concept of work, order and values that was unassimilable in the new social context.

Finally appeared the heritage of the Negroes from the west coast of Africa. They were wrenched from a variety of cultures and ethnic groups, thrust forth from the holds of slave ships, with their languages, beliefs, songs, dances and traditions, and brought face to face with two other cultures in an unknown environment.

These three cultural heritages met in confrontation and intermingled to form an amalgam which was not confined to particular areas but spread in varying degrees throughout the entire continent, forming the substratum of its social and cultural life.

The encounter of these three historical forces on this vast new geographical stage wrought great changes in each of them, and in time forged the dominant characteristics of the new society.

The Spaniard who had come to the Indies was subjected to far-reaching changes which affected almost everything he did. He soon ceased to resemble those who had remained behind in his native peninsula. His language, his food, the rhythm of his life, his relationships in work and his place in the hierarchy all changed.

More often than not he had to learn to live in a tropical climate, or in the shadow of the all-pervading forest or at heights where it was difficult for him to breathe. The absence, at first, of cows, oxen and beasts of burden made his adaptation to the new circumstances a traumatic experience. Instead of wheat and beef he had to eat new foodstuffs, including hitherto unknown South American produce such as the potato, the yucca, the tomato and maize.

The chroniclers of that time echo the astonishment of the Spaniard faced with this new experience. They tell of the need to eat "roots" and they seek ingenuous metaphors to describe and name new fruits such as the guava, the avocado pear, the annona, the coconut and the pineapple.

New objects brought with them strange names. The Spanish language became host to South American neologisms which not only designated new things but also described new relationships. Words such as cannibal, hurricane, canoe, hammock and cacique were destined to pass into all the European languages. When the Spaniard who had lived in South America returned to Europe he was considered a foreigner and given the name "Indiano".

No less fundamental was the change experienced by the Indians and the Negroes. They were subject to the working relationships of Europe and to forms of servitude which they had not known in the past. They saw new types of buildings arise incorporating Spanish and African features. They became acquainted with articles of furniture they had never seen before, such as the bed, objects such as the saddle, strange drinks, a new language, new ways of behaviour, a radically different form of worship and an unaccustomed mode of dress.

Those who were born in the new environment created by the mingling of the three races were subject to the continual interaction of the three cultures. A child such as Garcilaso de la Vega, called "El Inca" (1539-1616) who was to be one of the greatest chroniclers in Spanish of his time, was born and brought up in a house in Cuzco (Peru) that was typical of this mixing of cultures.

In one wing his father, Captain Sebastian Garcilaso de la Vega discussed with his comrades in arms, his friars and his counsellors the affairs of Castile and Almeria from the viewpoint of an expatriate Castilian. In another, his mother, the Inca Princess Isabel Chimpu Ocllo with her relatives, members of the last Inca royal family, would converse in the Quechua language, recalling the annals and past grandeurs of the Incas.

A difficult and constant process of interpenetration of these two contrary

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ARTURO USLAR-PIETRI, *Venezuela's ambassador and permanent delegate to Unesco, is one of Latin America's most famous writers. Author of many novels, short stories and essays such as* La Otra América *(The Other America) he has been professor of Hispano-American literature at Columbia University (U.S.A.). His novel* Las Lanzas Coloradas *has been published in English as* The Red Lances *(Knopf, New York, 1962).*

The clothes worn by the Indians of Tarabuco in Bolivia are an example of the assimilation and transformation of various aspects of Hispanic culture in Latin America. As well as his cloak, the traditional "poncho", this Indian wears a hat whose shape recalls the helmets of the conquistadors. The instrument he is holding, a *charango,* resembles the small Spanish guitar known as the *bandurria,* although it is higher-pitched and has fewer strings. At festival time, the Indians of Tarabuco wear spurs, possibly another reminder of the conquistadors, to beat out their dance-rhythms.

Photo © Mireille Vautier, Paris

visions of the world went on in the child's mind, shaping a mentality and a sensibility that could never be completely either that of an Indian or that of a Spaniard. It was this particular sensibility and vision which later enabled him to write his "Royal Commentaries of the Incas", the first great original testimony of the New World as it faced Europe, and the first expression of an awareness of what it meant to be a Hispano-American.

Two and a half centuries later, in a house in Caracas (Venezuela), a boy named Simon Bolivar was to inherit the combined legacy of the three races, by now mingled and modified. His governess during the deeply formative years of his childhood was one of his family's slaves, a Negress called Hipolita. Many subconscious traces of the songs and fables that the slave retained from her remote African heritage must have remained in the mind and sensibility of the future Liberator of Latin America.

Years later, returning from his extraordinary liberation campaigns which had carried him as far as the high-plateaux of Bolivia and Peru, Bolivar was making a triumphal entry into Caracas when he noticed Hipolita among the crowds pressing round to acclaim him. He immediately dismounted from his horse and went and hugged her to the astonishment of all around him.

This process of mingling and transformation extended to all aspects of life. Nothing could be adapted and transplanted without undergoing changes and modifications arising from the interaction of the three cultural heritages and the geographical environment.

The mixture of influences was not identical in all its social aspects nor in all countries. In music the presence of the Spaniard and the Negro was more predominant than that of the Indian. The Spanish guitar and the African drum began a long counterpoint which has still not drawn to an end and which has created original rhythms and songs that have spread across the entire world.

In architecture and decoration, however, the influence of the Indian was more apparent than that of the Negro. ▶

The great blossoming of architectural forms which has been called the "baroque of the Indies" is one fruitful instance and proof of this. All over Latin America, from the high-plateaux of the Andean cordillera to the Mexican meseta, admirable examples exist of this new sensibility. The baroque facade was endowed with a fresh gracefulness and a wealth of decoration wrought by local craftsmen.

Buildings such as the Church of La Compania in Quito (Ecuador) or the Sanctuary of Ocotlan in Mexico could never have seen the light of day in Spain. The ruins which stand in the forests on the sites of former Jesuit missions in Paraguay are the result of this remote and far reaching encounter which took place throughout South America.

The meeting of these cultures led to their separation from their original sources at a historic period in their evolution. This too was part of the great process of transplantation and confrontation. Thereafter, Negroes and Indians were cut off from any further developments in the cultures from which they had sprung.

This was true also for the Spaniards. Spanish culture in Latin America tended to become outmoded and to lag behind the later changes that occurred in Spain. In some cases communication between the two continents was inexistent and in others it was slow and incomplete.

The Spain of the 17th century lasted much longer in Latin America than it did in the Iberian peninsula. The changes introduced by the Bourbons —not only concerning customs and values but also language—reached Latin America late and incomplete. A Hispano-American of the 18th century spoke a Spanish which was dated and retained customs and tastes which in Spain had almost disappeared.

Cultural intermixture and a different, slowed-down historical "tempo" have since been fundamental and lasting characteristics of the whole of Latin America.

This is not, however, a passive originality created by contrasting factors or a fortuitous mingling of foreign elements. It is an originality that comes from a positive awareness and acceptance of enrichment from other sources which is exemplified in all the great epochs of Latin American cultural creation, be it the "baroque of the Indies" or modernism in literature.

Modernism flourished in Latin American letters between 1880 and 1914 and produced personalities as outstanding as the poet and author Ruben Dario. Here we have a man born in the shadow of the volcanoes of Central America, in a remote corner of Nicaragua where cultures mingled, who not only managed to produce a miraculous symbiosis of the most traditional and the most modern in European letters but was also responsible for the greatest and most fertile upheaval ever experienced in the literatures of Spain and Latin America.

Photo © Vautier-Decool, Paris

Neither Spain nor any other European country could have given birth to a man like Dario. His native cultural environment taught him to receive and combine ancient and modern, Spanish culture and Indian culture, tradition and innovation, standing apart from schools and periods, with none of the historical limitations of Europe.

The break for which Dario was responsible was not the result of dissension between various "schools" but sprang from a free acceptance of the whole varied, and even contradictory, cultural universe which was his as a Latin American. He was able to draw on what belonged to yesterday and what belonged to today—from the heritages of the Chorotega Indians and the Castilians of the past to the French influence of his own time, without feeling that he was breaking any bounds or infringing any temporal standard.

This accretion of sources and this mingling of periods and styles can be found in all the major creations of Hispano-American art. What in recent years has been called the Latin American "literary boom" is nothing more nor less than a somewhat belated discovery, in the work of certain major writers, of this mingling which, bowing to European standards, some have

Photo © Eduardo Barrios, Paris

CARNIVAL IN ORURO (BOLIVIA)

The fusion of different cultures which has accompanied ethnic intermixture in Latin America is one of the continent's most distinctive characteristics—a unique, creative process still going on today. The builders of the Church of Santa Prisca in Taxco near Mexico City (opposite page) were influenced by and incorporated Spanish architectural features in the building. But they transformed the baroque of the Iberian peninsula into a rich, exuberant style that is characteristically Latin American. Above, carnival scene at Oruro (Bolivia). The black-painted faces of the dancers and the shape of the drums they beat recall the presence of the African Negro in Bolivia and his influence on its life and culture. From the 18th century African Negroes settled in Bolivia's *yungas* (tropical valleys) to escape the harsh climate of the high Andes and the arduous working conditions of silver and tin mines situated at altitudes of up to 4,000 metres.

called "baroquism". In this particular case, rather than "baroquism" it should be called Hispano-Americanism.

In my opinion this is the great contribution of the veritable creative originality of Latin America to western civilization. Western civilization is the offspring of a wider and more complex mingling which has gone on for fifteen centuries between the most contradictory of heritages and influences.

The incredible and, at times, almost irreconcilable mixture of the Latin and the Germanic, the Christian and the pagan, created new cultural forms and new languages. Into the melting pot were cast German traditional law and Roman Law, primitive beliefs and Christianity, the poetic genealogy of Barbarian deities and Jewish prophecy, along with Greek philosophy, the aesthetic norms of the classical world and the concepts of a vast mosaic of nomad tribes and primitive peoples.

From this amalgam sprang Romanesque and Gothic and from it came the languages of today. From this source, too, came the fundamental characteristics of the first civilization which was to spread throughout the entire world.

This process came to an end in Europe many centuries ago. We could perhaps say that it ended with the Reformation and the Renaissance which to a certain extent stabilized and guided the future of Europe. But today the only great ensemble of lands and peoples where this process continues with full creative force is Latin America.

From Mexico to Argentina this vast formative process is still going on with an intensity that varies from region to region, characterizing the identity and vocation of this entire family of peoples. The great cultural currents of the original three sources and the others that joined them in the making of the New World are today developing, in fruitful and unexpected associations, their capacity to produce new possibilities of existence and expression.

Latin America, whose name is so inappropriate, is neither a new Europe ▶

nor a "Far West" but a metamorphosis of what is Western on a stage open to the influence of all that is non-Western. This has never happened elsewhere during any of the great periods of the global expansion of western culture.

Throughout most of Asia and Africa the European presence had a marked impact but it remained superimposed and separate, as a kind of historical exile which reproduced European life and forms on top of the unassimilated and even segregated cultures of the African and Asian peoples. In Asia and Africa the original culture and peoples were submerged under the superimposed imported structures of the countries and societies of Europe.

Only in Latin America do we find a living process of cultural intermingling similar to that which produced the culture of the Western world. And this is not only its principal originality but also its most important contribution to the cultural future of the world society of tomorrow. In no other part of the globe is there a comparable example of the creative interaction of different cultures.

The capital importance of this process has been underlined by many illustrious Latin Americans. Bolivar, in the days of his struggle for the political freedom of the South American continent, spoke of this characteristic and its consequences. He even declared that Latin America constituted a sort of "microcosm of mankind", "neither Indian nor Spanish" and that its full flowering on the scene of history constituted "the hope of the universe".

This is a trait of major importance for a vast family of peoples at a time when the world is advancing toward the broadest forms of co-operation and integration which have ever been envisaged.

Today we talk of continental integration and global systems of international co-operation, and yet constantly come up against the difficult obstacles which history has placed between peoples of the same continent.

Europe and Asia are complicated mosaics of languages and sub-cultures, of religious differences and old quarrels of identity which are a major hindrance to the process of integration.

None of these conflicts exists in Latin America. Shared by two sister languages—Spanish and Portuguese—which are practically identical means of communication, Latin America has one dominant creed and a similar cultural past. Today it constitutes the largest family of peoples united by a community of language, culture, religion, history and territory. Its present population of almost 300 million will rise to 500 or 600 million by the year 2000. The most elementary sense of unity and collaboration should transform their continent into one of the most significant theatres of future world history.

From the Tropic of Cancer to the Antarctic, from the summits of the Andes to the coasts of the Pacific and the Atlantic, with every kind of climate and type of soil, with all the natural resources, land and water necessary for immense development, Latin America is today the world's greatest reservoir of geographical integration and united peoples. Moreover, its tradition of racial intermixture enables it to draw close to and freely communicate with all the cultures of the modern world.

■ ***Arturo Uslar-Pietri***

THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN OF OCEANIA *Continued from page 11*

crippled cosmos, than of our actual islands. I am not saying we should reject such a literature, or that papalagi should not write about us, and vice versa. But the imagination must explore with love, honesty, wisdom and compassion.

Writers must write with *aroha, aloha, alofa, loloma* (1), respecting the people they are writing about, people who may view the void differently and who, like all other human beings, live through the pores of their flesh and mind and bone, who suffer, laugh, cry, copulate, and die.

In the last few years what can be called a South Pacific literature has started to blossom. In New Zealand, Alistair Campbell, of Cook Island descent, is acknowledged as a major poet; three Maori writers—Hone Tuwhare (poet), Witi Ihimaera (novelist), and Patricia Grace (short stories)—have become extremely well known.

In Australia, the aboriginal poets Kathy Walker and Jack Davis continue to plot the suffering of their people. In Papua New Guinea, "The Crocodile" by Vincent Eri—the first Papuan novel to be published—has already become a minor classic. Also in that country poets such as John Kasaipwalova, Kumalau Tawali, Alan Natachee, and Apisai Enos, and playwrights like Arthur Jawodimbari are publishing some powerful work.

Papua New Guinea has established a very forward-looking Creative Arts Centre, which is acting as a catalyst in the expressive arts movement, a travelling theatre, and an Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies. *Kovave* Magazine, put out by a group of Papua New Guinea writers, is already a respected literary journal.

Mana Magazine and *Mana* Publications, established by the South Pacific Creative Arts Society, have been a major catalyst in stimulating the growth of this new literature, especially in countries outside Papua New Guinea. Already numerous young poets, prose writers and playwrights have emerged. Some of them, we hope, will develop into major writers.

Our ties transcend barriers of culture, race, petty nationalism, and politics. Our writing is expressing a revolt against the hypocritical and exploitative aspects of our traditional, commercial and religious hierarchies, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and the degrading values being imposed from outside and by some elements in our societies.

In the traditional visual arts there has been a tremendous revival. That revival is also finding contemporary expression in the work of Maori artists such as Selwyn Muru, Ralph Hotere, Para Matchitt and Buck Nin; in the work of Aloi Pilioko of the Wallis and Futuna Islands, Akis and Kauage of Papua New Guinea, Aleki Prescott of Tonga, Sven Orquist of Western Samoa, Kuai of the Solomons, and many others.

The same is true in music and dance. The National Dance Theatres of Fiji and the Cook Islands are already well known throughout the world.

This artistic renaissance is enriching our cultures further, reinforcing our identities, self-respect, and pride, and taking us through a genuine decolonization; it is also acting as a unifying force in our region. In their individual journeys into the void, these artists, through their work, are explaining us to ourselves and creating a new Oceania.

■ ***Albert Wendt***

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(1) Respectively Maori, Hawaiian, Samoan and Fijian words each meaning love, compassion, charity.

BOOKSHELF

UNESCO BOOKS & PERIODICALS

■ **World Problems in Education,** by Jean Thomas. 1975, 166 pp. (24 F); **Constructive Education for Children,** by W.D. Wall. Co-published with Harrap, London (Available through Unesco except in U.K. where Harrap has exclusive rights) 1975, 349 pp. (54 F paperbound; 68 F hardbound) Both published in the International Bureau of Education's "Studies and Surveys in Comparative Education" series.

■ **New Unesco Source Book for Science Teaching.** Published as a "Modern Asia Edition" by Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, 1975.

■ **Source Book for Geography Teaching.** Published by Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, under arrangement with Unesco, 1973. 254 pp. (Rs 15.00)

■ **Script Writing for Short Films,** by James A. Beveridge. 3rd impression 1975. 45 pp. (6 F); **Access: Technology and Access to Communications Media,** by B.R. Webster. 1975, 54 pp. (8 F) Both published in Unesco's "Reports and Papers on Mass Communication" series.

■ **Music in Film and Television.** An international selective catalogue, 1964-1974, compiled and edited by the International Music Centre, Vienna (Austria). Co-published with Jugend und Volk, Vienna and Munich. 1975, 197 pp. (24 F)

■ **Nutrition Education Curricula,** by Gary A. Griffin and Luise Light. ("Educational Studies and Documents" series, No. 18) 1975, 53 pp. (8 F)

■ **The Modern Living Museum** is the theme of *Museum*, Unesco's quarterly on museography (Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1975). Each issue 17.50 F; annual subscription 60 F.

■ **Professionalism in Flux,** theme of Unesco's quarterly *International Social Science Journal* (Vol. XXVII, No. 4, 1975). Each issue 16 F; annual subscription 52 F.

■ **Aspects of Culture in Modern Society,** theme of Unesco's international quarterly *Cultures* (Vol. II, No. 2, 1975). Each issue 22 F; annual subscription 75 F.

OTHER BOOKS

■ **Flags Through the Ages and Across the World,** by Whitney Smith. McGraw-Hill Book Co. New York and Maidenhead (U.K.) 1975, 360 pp. ($34.95 until 31 May 1976; $39.95 thereafter)

■ **Thomas Mann (1875-1975).** Two essays on Mann by Peter de Mendelssohn and Herbert Wiesner and a bibliography of translations of his work. Heinz Moos Verlag, Munich, Germany (Fed. Rep.) in collaboration with Inter Nationes, Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Germany (Fed. Rep.) 1975, 94 pp.

■ **To Understand is to Invent: The Future of Education,** by Jean Piaget. A "Viking Compass edition" published by Grossman Publishers, New York, 1974. 148 pp. ($2.25)

UNESCO NEWSROOM

Unesco's latest guide to world translations

The Bible retains its place as the world's most translated book in the latest (25th) edition of *Index Translationum*, Unesco's annual international bibliography of translations (see also page 35). This edition, covering nearly 40,000 translations appearing in 1972, also reveals that for the first time Marx (62 translations) and Engels (59) outscored Lenin (57 translations—against 381 in 1971). Authors translated into over 30 languages include Dostoievsky (44), Tolstoy (43), Jules Verne (41), Gorki (40), Pearl Buck (38), Balzac (37), Shakespeare and Solzhenitsyn (35 each). As in 1971 the U.S.S.R. published most new translations (4,463) followed by Spain (up from 3rd to 2nd place with 3,204 titles). In 3rd place is the Fed. Rep. of Germany (2,767) followed by the U.S.A. (2,189), Japan (2,180) (up from 7th to 5th place) and France (2,176).

Cultural policies in Africa

A Unesco-sponsored Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa, meeting recently in Accra (Ghana) studied a wide range of subjects ranging from the role of African languages and the mass media to the relations between culture and development, education, technology and the environment. Speaking of education in Africa today, Unesco's Director-General, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, told the conference: "Any educational system must ensure the preservation and the transmission of the values of a given society. Thus Unesco encourages its Member States to define educational policies which correspond with their own realities and to the needs of their economic, social and cultural development. Modern education cannot therefore ignore African languages and should require knowledge and mastery of them".

Elm tree disease: an ecological disaster

Millions of elm trees in Europe and North America died in 1975 of a new strain of Dutch elm disease. In this ecological disaster nearly 2 million elms died in southern England last summer alone. Dutch elm disease, so named because it was first identified and studied in the Netherlands 50 years ago, is caused by a beetle which implants a poisonous fungus under an elm's bark. The tree fights back by producing a gummy antibody which clogs its sap passages, starving it of water and nutrient so that it chokes itself to death. No cure or preventative is known, and scientists are currently seeking disease-resistant elm varieties.

Sharing works of art

A 13th century carved ivory comb, currently delighting visitors to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, will travel to Paris in 1978 for a five-year stay at the Louvre Museum. The comb, which will alternate visits to each city, was bought jointly by the two museums in 1972. Such "co-ownership to expedite art exchanges between countries " is urged in a Unesco proposal to be studied by specialists from different countries at a forthcoming Paris meeting.

Mediterranean pollution

Ninety per cent of the sewage of the Mediterranean basin is piped or dumped into the sea untreated, reports Paul E. Ress in "Unesco Features". Other pollution comes from dangerous heavy metals and chemicals dumped by industrial plants. The mercury level in some species of fish, for example, is close to or above the safety level recommended by the World Health Organization.

Engineers and the environment

The effects of engineers' and technicians' work on the environment will be a major theme of a Unesco-organized international conference on the education and training of engineers and technicians, to be held in New Delhi (India) from 20 to 26 April 1976. The meeting will also discuss how to adapt technology to local needs in the developing world, the need for revising training programmes, and how to promote closer co-operation between education and industry.

Old arts via new media

Unesco is supporting research into ways of adapting old arts to new media. During 1976 a workshop will be held in Salzburg (Austria) to look into the problems of converting stage plays for television. It is being organized jointly with the International Institute for Music, Dance and Theatre in the Audio-Visual Media. In India, the Theatre Institute of the University of Chandigarh is to adapt ancient legends to modern theatrical presentation, calling on artists from neighbouring Asian countries as well as India.

Flashes...

■ *Unesco will help Kuwait in a 5-year plan to reorient its educational system, introducing primary and secondary comprehensive schools.*

■ *Italy has agreed to exempt from value added tax private services and work for the restoration of Venice if handled by Unesco.*

■ *Over 84 per cent of all women of working age in the German Democratic Republic are employed and over 80 per cent of the country's schoolteachers are women.*

■ *Tourism is now Nepal's biggest source of foreign exchange, the annual number of tourists having risen from 6,000 in 1962 to over 70,000 in 1974.*

■ *Tunisia is launching a new school building and equipment programme, prepared by a Unesco mission, with the aid of an $8.9 million loan from the World Bank.*

Letters to the Editor

THE UNITED NATIONS AND WORLD PEACE

Sir,

Your November 1975 issue reminded us, in your usual graphic and moving way, of the awfulness of the 1939-45 war, of the U.N.'s contribution to the peace, and of the relentless preparations being made for the eventuality of yet *another* world war.

I believe that we are unlikely to get much disarmament except reciprocally with a general growth in international co-operation and in the mutual trust which this should engender. The distressing thing is that while the U.N. has headed up an impressive growth in international co-operation, extending from purely technical matters such as telecommunications to huge undertakings like a global strategy for attaining a new economic order, this co-operation is not producing a fully reciprocal increase in mutual trust. The reason for this is simply the phenomenon of the arms race itself.

Any natural increase in trust which should accrue from co-operation is stultified: between the super powers by the determination of one or the other to hold the advantage; and between all other countries by the economic and political temptations to sell and buy more and more weaponry, including potentially dangerous nuclear reactors.

Surely the General Assembly must soon become deeply alarmed at the dreadful dangers into which the human race is drifting. This is now our main hope, since the various alliances and the parties to strategic balances have had their chance and have failed to arrest this drift. It is also a *reasonable* hope, for the General Assembly has recently shown it has the patience, skill and responsibility to arrive at a global consensus on the outlines of a new international economic order. If it can do that, might it not be able to negotiate a consensus for survival?

The General Assembly might take an initiative on each of the three main elements in the overall danger.

First, the arms race between the super powers. This is leading to the invention of ever more horrific weapons of destruction. It has led to the distortion of the entire economies of the super powers and to the waste of vast human and material resources which are urgently needed to redeem half the world's poverty.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks seem to be getting nowhere because one side or another insists on superiority. Could not the General Assembly set up an Arms Monitoring Board to collate and publicize all the information available from such bodies as SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) and the various national and University Institutes of Strategic Studies on actions which disturb the strategic balance and give a new thrust to the spiral of the arms race?

Second, the arms trade in weapons. Most industrialized countries have got themselves into a situation where many of their biggest firms depend for viability and much of their labour force depends for employment, on arms sales. And many non-industrialized countries are avid buyers because of local international tensions, or because of domestic insecurity or a need for prestige.

A U.N. Arms Monitoring Board would help here too by objectively exposing the facts of the traffic. But a far greater contribution would be for the General Assembly to negotiate a general acceptance that the new international economic order must include provision for progressive steps in the registering, control and reduction of arms sales if it is to make sense at all.

Third, the sale of nuclear reactors which produce near-weapons-grade wastes is breaking down such safeguards as were obtained by the Non-Proliferation Treaty, so that we feel ourselves returning to a situation like that of the 1930s when any nation deciding to go beserk could do so, but this time armed with *the bomb*.

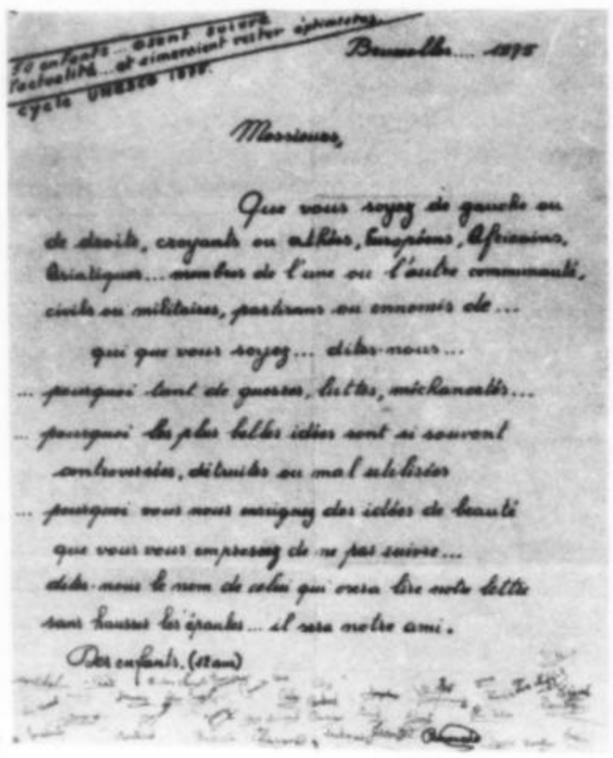
The one difference now is that the General Assembly has recently moved towards a single vision of interdependence and has had significant successes in harmonizing the will of member states, whereas in the 1930s the Assembly of the League of Nations was falling into disarray. It is to the General Assembly, therefore, that we must look again, this time to negotiate at an early date the acceptance by all states of control of all nuclear wastes by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I cannot believe that the U.N. General Assembly, which showed such industry, patience, skill and determination to arrive at a consensus on a new international order for the world, will now fail to protect that emerging order from self-destruction. There is no one else to do so.

Basil Hembry,
Wimbish, Saffron Walden
Essex, U.K.

OPEN LETTER FROM 50 SCHOOLCHILDREN

The text reproduced here in facsimile is an open letter presented to Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of Unesco, by children of the primary school at Etterbeek near Brussels (Belgium) when Mr. M'Bow visited the school in November 1975.



"50 CHILDREN... ARE DETERMINED TO FOLLOW WORLD EVENTS...AND WANT TO STAY OPTIMISTIC

Brussels 1975

Whether you are left-wing or right-wing, whether you are believers or atheists, Europeans, Africans or Asians... members of one community or another, civilians or military, whether you are supporters or opponents of...

Whoever you may be... please tell us...

...why there are so many wars, conflicts, wrongs

...why the noblest ideals are so often contested, suppressed or misused

...why you teach us splendid ideas which you yourselves then fail to follow...

Tell us the name of the person who won't dismiss our letter with a shrug of the shoulders... and he or she will be our friend.

A group of 12-year-old children"

NEW STATUS FOR WOMEN

Sir,

On the occasion of International Women's Year 1975, it is understandable that the "Unesco Courier" should have given much space to this theme and possible consequences of according a new status to women. But since you had dealt adequately with the subject in your March 1975 issue, I was disappointed to find the entire August-September number also devoted to this question.

It is not that I lack interest in the problems of women's status throughout the world. But in my view the whole presentation of International Women's Year has been too much like a publicity campaign. What good it will do and who will benefit from it is difficult to say. Most women who have been questioned about the impact of International Women's Year say that their lives are no different now from what they were in 1974. Consideration of women's status must inevitably involve that of men too. So why not look at the human condition as a whole?

Richard Gatry
Bonne, France

ACCIDENTS AT WORK

Sir,

By 1974 the number of serious accidents at work had risen to a world figure over 1,700,000 yearly. What steps have been taken at the international level to prevent accidents at work?

In view of the alarming world figures, would it not be worthwhile to consider devoting some space to the subject of preventing accidents at work?

Eduardo Torre Olivé
Havana, Cuba

Imp. GEORGES LANG, PARIS. — Dépôt légal C 1 — Février 1976 — IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE (Printed in France)

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■ The latest edition gives data on 39,143 titles published in 1972 in 57 countries (See also news item page 33).

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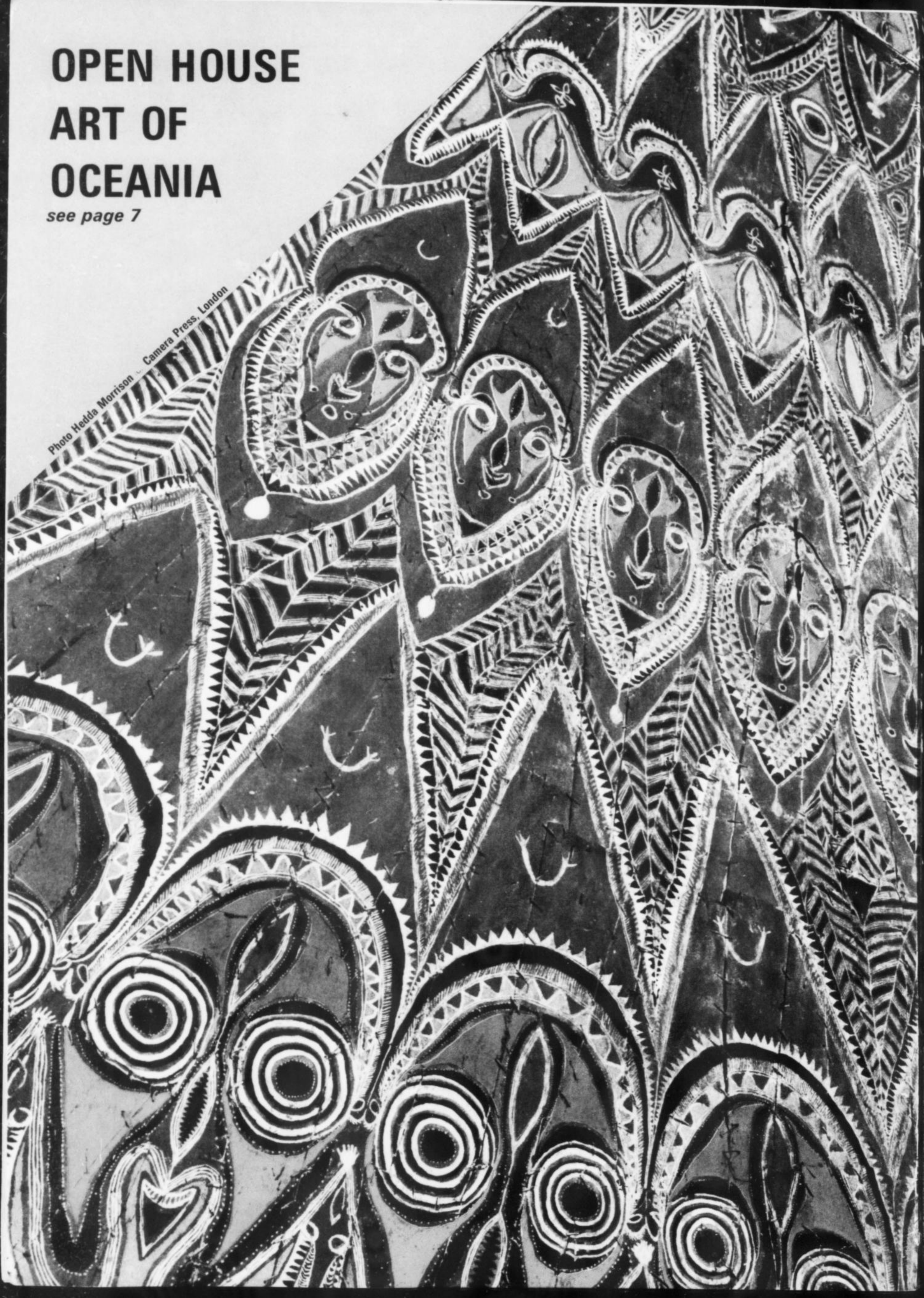

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